Population Bulletin

The Changing American Family

By Arland Thornton and Deborah Freedman

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Abstract—This *Bulletin* documents recent changes in American family patterns resulting both from long-term trends in urbanization, industrialization, and economic growth and the disruption of the Great Depression and World War II, as well as changed attitudes toward marriage, parenthood, divorce, and the roles of women. Following a postwar boom in the 1950s and 1960s, marriage rates have now fallen to levels observed in the early 20th century. Since 1970 the number of unmarried couples living together has more than tripled to 1.9 million in 1983. The divorce rate has now stabilized after more than doubling since 1960, but at the current level, half of all recent marriages will end in divorce. Most divorced persons remarry fairly quickly, often creating complex families of "step-relatives." With 19 percent of households with minor children now headed by a woman with no husband present, up to half of all children will live for some time in a fatherless family before reaching age 18. Over half of all married women, including 49 percent of married mothers of preschool children, now hold a paid job outside the home. Working wives boost a family's income by an average 40 percent but still are expected to shoulder most responsibility for home and child care. White women now in their twenties say they expect to have an average of two children, but are delaying childbearing to such an extent that 29 percent could end up childless. Most of the elderly live on their own but usually near children whom they see frequently. Despite changes in traditional family patterns, Americans consistently report that a happy marriage and good family life are the most important aspects of life. And though most Americans now live with few or no family members, they maintain active contact with a large network of kin.

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POPULATION BULLETIN

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Art Haupt

Despite changes in traditional family patterns, Americans consistently report that a happy marriage and a good family life are the most important aspects of life.

The Changing American Family

By **Arland Thornton** and **Deborah Freedman**

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Some of the issues most fiercely contested in the American public arena during the past decade have focused directly on central aspects of the family. The battle over the Equal Rights Amendment concerned appropriate roles for men and women and the allocation of opportunities and rewards by gender. The abortion controversy bears directly on the reproductive function of the family, while the debate over sex education in schools and birth control for minors involves not only teenage sexual activity and childbearing but also the right of public organizations to intervene in relationships between parents and children. Important elements in these controversies concern the relative roles of public and familial supports for individual Americans and the extent to which governments should influence familial matters.

This surge of interest in family issues mirrors the magnitude of the changes occurring in family values and behavior. Although the family continues to be a central institution in American society, the shape of the institution is changing in ways that are influencing most Americans. Consider the following:

- Fifty-six percent of women aged 20-24 in 1983 have never been married, compared to only 36 percent of women this age in 1970.
- The number of unmarried couples living together has more than tripled since 1970 to nearly 1.9 million in 1983.
- Half of all recent first marriages will end in divorce if current rates continue, and up to half of all children will experience living in a fatherless family before they reach age 18.

- Currently, 19 percent of households with children under 18 are headed by a woman with no husband present.
- Over half (51 percent in 1982) of all married women now hold a paid job outside the home, including 49 percent of married mothers of preschool children.
- Median income for married-couple families with a working wife was $30,300 in 1982, compared to $21,300 where only the husband worked.
- Young white women now in the prime childbearing ages of the twenties say they expect to have an average of two children but are delaying the start of their families to such an extent that nearly 30 percent of them could end up childless.
- Eighteen percent of all births in 1980 were out of wedlock.

These trends affecting family patterns have had major repercussions on many aspects of American life, ranging from changes in divorce laws and marital settlements to the new political force of the women's vote and a proliferation of new products and advertising strategies aimed at two-earner families. The impact of family changes on individuals are demonstrated by the growth of organizations designed for people living in nontraditional family situations—the National Association of Step Parents, Mothers Without Custody, Equal Rights for Fathers, Parents Without Partners, and Fathers Who Care. A stream of new books provides advice on surviving divorce, combining motherhood and a career, being a successful stepparent, and being a single adult. The changes seem so great that many Americans have begun to wonder if the very institution of the family will survive.

In this *Bulletin,* we document some basic past and current trends in family life and values in the United States. Some current trends are similar to the past, but many are indeed marked changes. However, the family is resilient, family ties remain strong, and Americans consistently report that a happy marriage and a good family life are the most important aspects of life.

Marriage and Divorce

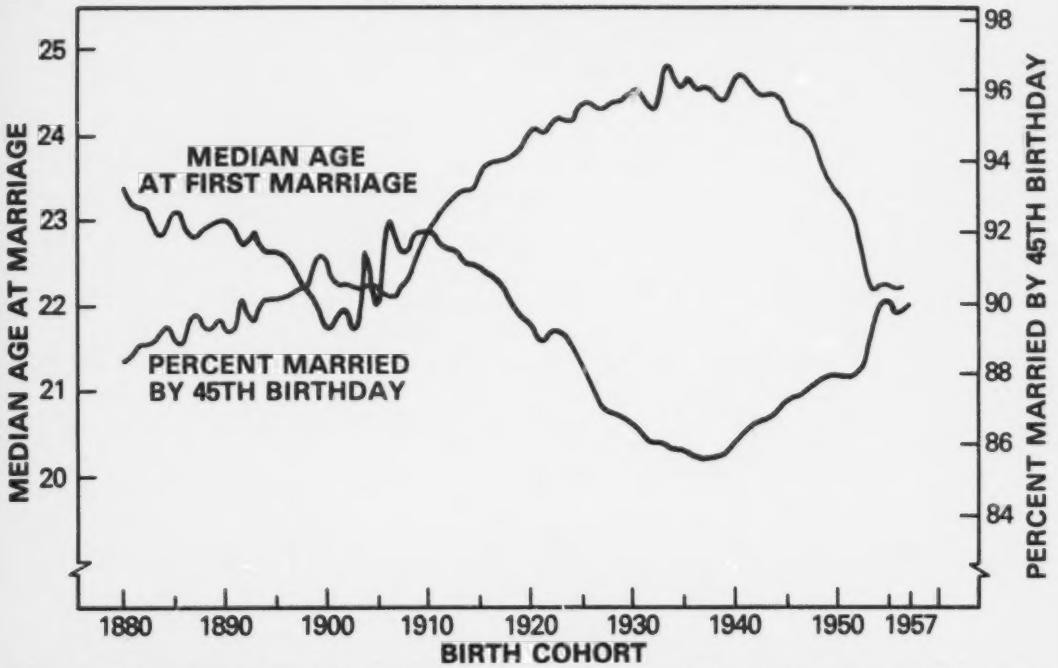
In the United States, marriage has traditionally marked the creation of a new family. Typically, families have been formed when previously unmarried persons join together in marriage. Marriages, however, do not last forever and eventually are dissolved, either by the death of a spouse or voluntarily through divorce. Important for the institution of the family is how long marriages last, on average, until dissolved, and whether the most frequent cause is death or divorce. Marital dissolution, however, does not signal the end of the marital experience for many former partners. Most formerly married Americans enter into a new marriage fairly quickly, thus revealing a preference for the married state. Recently another type of arrangement has become more common—couples living together without getting married.

First marriage

First marriage patterns have gone through a wave of change since World War II. Except for a brief upturn at the end of World War I and a sharp decline during the Depression of the 1930s, first marriage rates were quite steady during the first four decades of this century. But after World War II came the "postwar marriage boom"—a substantial, pervasive increase in marriage rates that helped spawn the baby boom. The rates remained high through the 1950s and 1960s and then fell sharply again during the 1970s and now have begun to stabilize at levels very similar to those of the first few decades of the century.[1]

Figure 1 shows how the postwar marriage boom reshaped the pattern of first marriage in America. Median age at first marriage fell dramatically—from about 23 for white women born in the 1880s to just over 20 for those born in the late 1930s, who married in the late 1950s and early 1960s. The proportion of people ever marrying also increased. While

Figure 1. Median Age at First Marriage and Percent Married by Age 45, Birth Cohorts of White Women: 1880-1957



Source: Arland Thornton and Willard L. Rodgers, *Changing Patterns of Marriage and Divorce in the United States*, Final Report to the National Institute for Child Health and Human Development, Ann Arbor, 1983, Tables 2-1 and 2-5.

about 11 percent of white women born during the 1880s had not married by age 45, only about 3 percent of those born in the late 1930s remained single at that age. However, the marital patterns of more recent "birth cohorts" are close to those observed early in the century. Median age at marriage for white women born during the 1950s has increased to around 22, and it now appears that about 10 percent, and possibly more, will never marry. In 1983, 56 percent of all American women aged 20-24 still had not married, compared to just 36 percent of women that age in 1970.[2]

The marriage boom was both more substantial and longer-lasting for men than for women. While the average age at marriage fell about three years for women, the decline was about four years for men—from about age 27 to 23. In addition, marriage rates for women declined somewhat during the 1960s but the rates for men held fairly steady. This can probably be attributed to the "marriage squeeze"—a phenomenon caused by a shortage of men relative to the number of women in the prime marrying years. The shortage resulted because the number of babies born each year as the baby boom mounted from 1947 was larger than the number born the year before and women tend to marry men two to three years older than themselves. Thus, there was an insufficient number of older men from which the women in each of these successively larger birth cohorts could choose their mates.

Prior to World War II, similar proportions of blacks and whites married, but blacks tended to marry at earlier ages. However, the postwar marriage boom was not as marked for blacks as for whites, especially at the younger ages, and average age at first marriage is now higher for blacks than for whites.[3]

The timing of marriage relative to school attendance and employment also

changed markedly after World War II. Previously, the transition to adulthood had been made in a fairly regular and orderly fashion; most men and women finished their schooling and most men began to work before marrying. But after the war many young people chose to marry while still in school and before beginning work.[4]

Part of this shift was linked to the postwar expansion of education, which increased educational attainment and thus the age of school completion. Although educational opportunities and attainment had expanded somewhat before the war, still in 1940 only 36 percent of men and 40 percent of women aged 25-29 had completed four years of high school, and just 7 percent of men and 5 percent of women had completed four years of college. By 1979, 85 percent of both men and women in this age group had completed high school, and one-fourth of men and one-fifth of women had completed college.[5] This increase in educational attainment added to the decline in age at marriage in the postwar era meant that many more people married before finishing their education; nearly a fourth of the men born during the 1930s did so, compared to less than a tenth of those born two decades earlier.[6] With age at marriage now rising, this trend has been reversed, but there is unlikely to be a return to the prewar pattern of nearly universal postponement of marriage until after school completion, unless age at marriage increases enough to offet the current high levels of education.

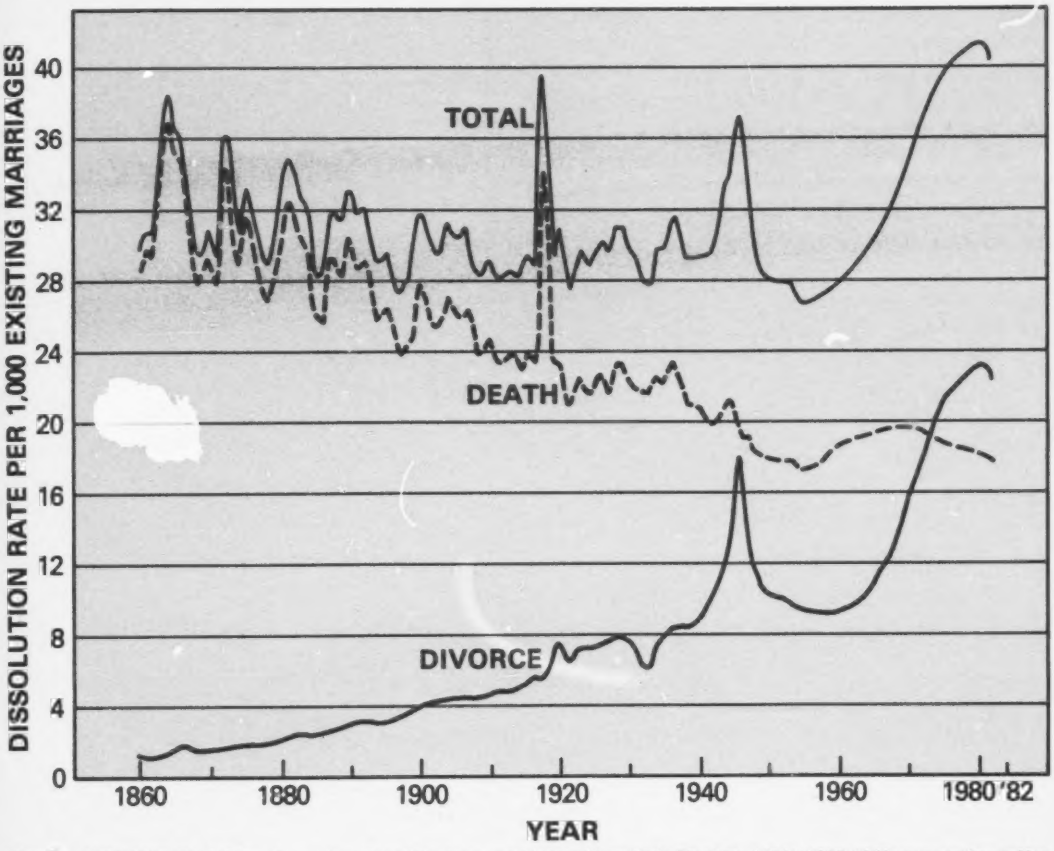
Attitudes toward marriage and remaining single have changed markedly along with the changes in marital patterns. The legitimacy of remaining single is increasingly accepted by both young people and their parents; Americans no longer regard getting married as necessarily better than remaining single. A 1976 national study found that only a third of all Americans would disapprove of a decision by someone to remain single—a decline from 50 percent in 1957. Although most young people now say that they would be bothered at least a little if they did not marry, only a few say they would be greatly bothered by that outcome. Mothers also report that they would not be greatly bothered if their children did not marry.[7]

Harold M. Lambert

Marriage was early and virtually universal during the postwar marriage boom, but now young Americans are postponing marriage and 10 percent or more may never marry.

Although the imperative to marry has weakened, marriage continues to be highly valued by Americans. Americans consistently report that a happy marriage and a good family life are the most important aspects of life. Most young Americans still expect to marry; a 1980 study found that more than 90 percent of American youth expect to marry—a proportion similar to that found in 1960. Most young Americans are also optimistic about the permanency of their marriages. However, marital plans have changed to parallel the increases in actual marriage ages; between 1960 and 1980 the median age at which young people expect to marry increased by a year for men and a year and a half for women.[8] Even though most young Americans value marriage and plan to marry, the fact that they accept the legitimacy of single life and plan

Figure 2. Marital Dissolutions per 1,000 Existing Marriages, by Divorce, Death, and Total: 1860-1982



Sources: 1860-1956: Paul H. Jacobsen, *American Marriage and Divorce* (New York: Rinehart, 1959); 1957-1982: rates estimated by the authors.

to postpone their own marriages may result in an increase in the percentage who never marry.

Divorce

Marital conflict and divorce have been recognized as serious social concerns since as far back as the late 18th century. But, while marital incompatability has always been with us, Figure 2 shows that, except for a sharp but temporary increase after World War II, the actual rate of divorce in the United States increased only gradually and steadily, with some minor fluctuations, from 1860 to the early 1960s. Then came two decades of sustained and rapid increase, with the rate more than doubling, so that by the end of the 1970s more than 2 percent of existing marriages were being terminated by divorce each year. Then the rate leveled off and there was even a slight decline in 1982. Actual *numbers* of annual divorces climbed to a record 1.21 million in 1981 and then also dipped 3 percent to 1.18 million in 1982—the first decline since 1962.[9]

The forces behind the surge in divorce during the 1960s and 1970s were not only strong but also pervasive, affecting all races and age groups about the same. Thus, the divorce differentials observed in the 1950s—less divorce among whites than among blacks and less among older

persons and those married at later ages—persisted through the 1970s.[10]

The rapid increase in divorce has meant that, while 29 percent of the couples married in 1952 were divorced by their 25th wedding anniversary, couples married in 1957 took only 20 years to experience a similar attrition, those married in 1962 took only 15 years, and among couples married in 1967, 28 percent were divorced after ten years of marriage. Almost half of the marriages of 1973 will end in divorce if the divorce rates of 1977 were to continue, compared to only about 5 percent of the marriages of the 1860s. For black Americans the current proportion is even higher; as many as two-thirds of all recent marriages of black Americans could be terminated by divorce if current rates continue.[11] Black couples are also much more likely to separate than white married couples.

Of course, marriages are also terminated when one spouse dies. From 1860 through the mid-1960s, the increasing divorce rate was generally offset by the declining death rate. Consequently, except for unusual fluctuations in mortality and divorce, the total marital dissolution rate remained roughly constant or even declined somewhat over this century (Figure 2). During the 1960s and 1970s, however, the rapid increase in divorce outstripped the decline in mortality, resulting in an increase in the total marital dissolution rate.

Children of divorce

One of the most serious consequences of the high divorce rate is its effect on the lives of children. Over a million children are affected by divorce each year in the United States. The 1.2 million children whose parents divorced in 1979 represented nearly 2 percent of all children under age 18. The exposure of children to marital disruption is not a recent phenomenon, however. Some 25 to 30 percent of all children born during the first half of this century experienced the disruption of their parents' marriage before they reached age 18, with the main reason shifting over time from mortality to separation and divorce. However, the marked rise in divorce during the 1960s and 1970s has increased the total exposure of children to family dissolution. Dissolution rates of the late 1970s imply that about one of every three white children and two of three black children born after marriage will experience a parental marital dissolution by age 16. Most children of divorced parents live with their mother, and the majority will experience living in a fatherless home for at least five years. Furthermore, this experience is not necessarily ended when the mother remarries; approximately one-third of white and one-half of black children whose mothers remarry will experience a second parental marital dissolution before they reach adulthood.[12]

Reasons for the high divorce rate

It would be easy to interpret the increase in divorce as a sign of deteriorating family life and declining marital happiness, but there are other possible reasons: people may now expect more of marriage and thus be more aware and less tolerant of their marital problems; Americans may now be more accepting of divorce as a solution to an unhappy marriage; and changes in laws and economic circumstances have made divorce more feasible. One study suggests that marital happiness has actually increased; the proportion of people saying that their marriage was either very happy or above average went up from 68 percent in 1957 to 80 percent in 1976.[13] While this finding probably partly reflects the fact that more unhappy marriages were terminated by divorce during the 1970s than in the 1950s, it also raises doubts about a general decline in marital happiness.

The same study also showed that the proportion of people perceiving problems in their marriage increased at the same time—from 46 percent in 1957 to 61 percent in 1976. But this probably reflects not so much an increase in marital prob-

lems as the greater expectations for marriage which now make people less tolerant of ordinary difficulties in their own marriages

Generally negative attitudes toward divorce have been declining as Americans have become more willing to see it as a solution in specific cases. The extent of this shift is illustrated by a study in which 82 percent of women interviewed in 1980 disagreed with the statement: "When there are children in the family, parents should stay together even if they don't get along"; only 51 percent of these same women disagreed with this in 1962. Preferences for easier divorce laws have also increased recently.[14] Of course, this apparently greater acceptance of divorce could be more a consequence than a cause of increasing divorce.

The increase in women's labor force participation and decline in family size probably have made it easier for Americans today, especially women, to obtain a divorce. Changes in marital laws have also facilitated divorce. In fact, the spiraling divorce rate has been a major contributor to the veritable revolution in family law. The first no-fault divorce law was passed in 1969 in California, and by 1980 all but Illinois and South Dakota had adopted some form of no-fault divorce.[15] This has made moral issues less relevant in divorce litigation, while property division and child custody rights have become the important concerns. At the same time, the incidence of family litigation has exploded: "Surveys show that roughly half the cases on civil court dockets are family law cases, largely a result of the higher divorce rate."[16]

For divorced women, financial problems loom large. The payment of alimony (now generally called "spousal maintenance") has never been common.[17] Alimony now is probably awarded only rarely, and then primarily to help the wife temporarily until she can get a job. On the other hand, judicial rulings regarding the division of marital property have become more equitable for women. Until very recently, all but the few "community property" states followed English common law and awarded property in a divorce to the person whose name appeared on the title, usually the husband. Now most states have adopted more equitable distribution laws for divorce settlements, with the definition of equitable sometimes spelled out as equal, but more often left to judicial decision. The definition of marital property remains in flux; pension benefits, medical benefits, seniority rights, and military pensions have been included. Still controversial and currently the subject of litigation is whether the value of professional degrees and careers can be quantified and included in marital settlements. Judges still award child-support payments, but in 1982 only 69 percent of white women and 34 percent of black women who had minor children from an absent father had been awarded or had an agreement to receive such payments.[18]

Despite legal shifts toward more equitable property settlements, wives typically find themselves financially much worse off than their former spouse after a divorce.[19] The family assets to be divided are not large in many marriages. No-fault divorce laws have restricted wives in more prosperous families from bargaining for a favorable financial settlement in exchange for an uncontested divorce. Child-support awards, while important for divorced mothers, often are not large and frequently are not paid. In 1981, only 75 percent of divorced and separated women due child-support payments actually received any and the average payment for the year was about $2,300.[20] Only about half of payments are ever made in full, and for women whose marriages have been terminated for several years the payment rate is even lower. Collecting delinquent payments is expensive, time-consuming, and difficult for divorced mothers. Federal and state governments now have programs to enforce child-support decisions, but they provide only marginal relief to divorced women. Meanwhile, in job

markets still generally tilted against women, many divorced women have trouble finding a job that pays enough to support a family, especially those who have been out of the labor force for some time. With all this, divorce now constitutes a major cause of poverty among women and their children.

Judicial decisions regarding child custody have also changed. Until the middle of the 19th century, children automatically went to their fathers, but as economic conditions changed, the laws were modified to award custody to mothers as the natural nurturers of children during their "tender years." In most states, judges now make custody decisions on the basis of the child's best interest. Mothers still obtain custody in about nine out of ten cases, but fathers more often seek custody, and joint custody—now legal in 28 states—is an option viewed more favorably by many judges. Meanwhile, litigation over custody and visitation rights has increased greatly. Grandparents also now go to court to obtain the right to visit with their grandchildren.

Remarriage

Most family scholars believe that divorce stems from dissatisfaction with a specific spouse and does not represent disillusionment with marriage as an institution. Most divorced people remarry, so the remarriage rate following divorce has been very high in the United States—generally exceeding the first marriage rate. Many of these remarriages occur fairly soon after divorce; for example, about half of all women who divorce while still relatively young remarry within three years and from 60 to 70 percent remarry within five years.[21] Men, however, are more likely than women to remarry eventually after divorce and remarriage rates are also higher for younger than for older divorced people.

Remarriage rates among black Americans are considerably lower than those of whites. One national study of young ever-separated women found that two-thirds of the white women had remarried by the interview in 1970, but only about one-third of the black women. This disparity reflects the fact that blacks are both more likely than whites to remain separated without divorcing and less likely than whites to remarry after a divorce.[22]

Most divorced people remarry.

By 1977, 43 percent of all new marriages were remarriages for one or both of the partners, up from 32 percent of marriages in 1969, and in 1980, 20 percent of all existing marriages included at least one previously divorced spouse.[23] Many of these remarriages involve people who have been married at least twice before.

In earlier times, remarriages usually involved people whose former spouse had died. These families were complex, often including stepparents and stepchildren and siblings related only through marriage or who shared only one biological parent. Now remarried families have become both much more numerous and more complicated because most remarriages involve divorced persons whose former spouses are still alive and living elsewhere, often with children from that marriage. A recent study estimated

that in at least 40 percent of remarriages with partners in their thirties, one of the partners, usually the husband, has a child from a previous marriage who is living elsewhere.[24] In these cases a central family relationship—that between parent and child—is split across at least two households.

Remarried families often maintain relationships with the former spouse and his or her family. These can become especially complicated when both spouses in a remarriage have been divorced before, perhaps more than once, and have children from the previous marriage, and when former spouses also remarry. Of course, the new configurations created by divorce and remarriage can be a source of additional support and family interaction. But they add family responsibilities as well and can bring new conflicts and tensions, particularly for children, who are the chief links between former spouses and their current families. How can consistent guidelines for discipline be maintained when parents share custody or when the children in a household have differing relationships to the parents who maintain the household? What can a stepmother do to win acceptance from her new spouse's children? How should children relate to their enlarged group of siblings and other new "step-relatives"? Such complexities probably help explain why divorce rates among remarriages are as high or higher than the rates for first marriages.[25]

Remarriage has generally followed the trend in first marriage, with a substantial rise after World War II. Unlike first-marriage rates, however, remarriage rates continued to rise during the 1960s, in tandem with the surge in newly divorced young people—the group most likely to remarry. Remarriage rates computed separately for divorced and widowed women remained fairly steady through the 1960s and then, like first-marriage rates, dropped sharply during the mid-1970s and seem to have stabilized at the end of the decade. This leveling off might be expected to continue in the 1980s with the divorce rate now also apparently stabilized. Even so, the number of people remarrying fairly soon after divorce remains high.

The unmarrieds

With reduced rates of first marriage and remarriage combined with high divorce rates, the percentage of currently single adults has increased markedly. In 1982, only 39 percent of women aged 20-24 were currently married and living with their husband, compared to 64 percent of women this age in 1960.[26] Single life is now particularly common for black adult Americans. Among women aged 30-54 in 1982, less than half of black women were married and living with their husband, compared to more than three-fourths of white women.

This growing market of unmarrieds is now a prime target for businesses and organizations. Community agencies organize social activities especially for singles, commercial firms promote dating services, and many businesses have designed products, services, and new marketing techniques to cater to the special needs of the new unmarried group, including a proliferation of new books, magazines, and newspapers offering advice on how to enjoy and manage single living.

Cohabitation without marriage

The number of unmarried American adults sharing a household with an unrelated person of the opposite sex more than tripled between 1970 and 1977 and nearly doubled again in the five years from 1977 to 1982. Though the rise tapered off in the next year, still, in March 1983, close to 1.9 million couples—4 percent of all couples maintaining a separate household—were living together without benefit of matrimony, up from about half a million in 1970.[27] This increase in cohabitation can be attributed both to the larger number of unmarried people in the population—the result of declining marriage rates and increasing divorce rates—and their greater ten-

Art Haupt

The fast-growing single group is a prime new target for businesses and organizations.

dency to live together without marriage. Cohabitation has increased among persons of all ages and marital statuses, but particularly among the young and the divorced. By 1983, eight of every ten unmarried-couple households were maintained by a person under 45 and 28 percent included at least one child under 15.[28]

The figures on current cohabitation considerably understate the percentage of young persons who will cohabit at some time during their lives. Eighteen percent of a 1974-75 sample of men in their twenties said they had lived with a woman without marriage for six months or more, even though only 5 percent were currently cohabiting.[29] By 1983, the percentage of men with some experience of cohabitation must be much higher, paralleling the rise in current cohabitation.

There is little to document the extent to which cohabiting partners view living together as a prelude to marriage, an alternative to marriage, or simply a more economical and enjoyable form of independent living. Thus, it is difficult to assess the effect of cohabitation on marriage rates. The decline in marriage and rise in cohabitation are clearly linked, but which causes the other remains uncertain. Some cohabiting couples probably would have chosen marriage during earlier times. One study has shown that at least one-fourth of the drop in the percentage of ever-married persons between 1970 and 1977 was due to rising cohabitation.[30] However, it is still not clear whether cohabitation has increased because more people are delaying marriage or because the new popularity and acceptability of cohabitation encourages couples to choose it in lieu of marriage.

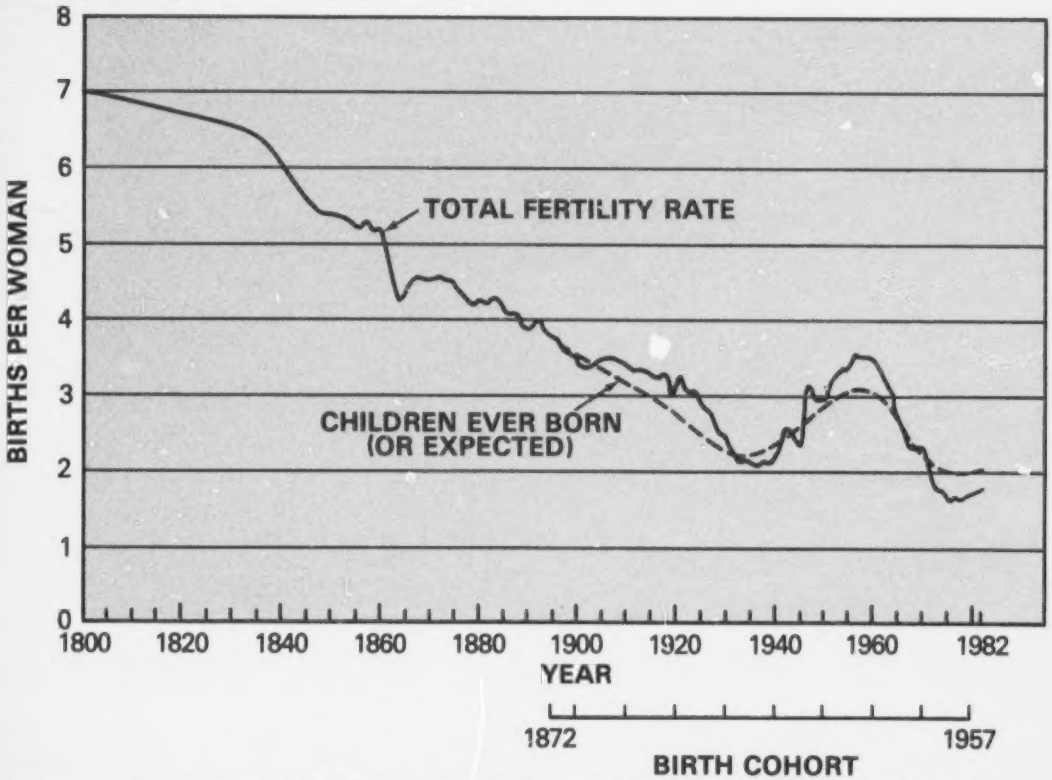
Fertility

American families were large and unplanned at the start of the 19th century. White women bore, on average, about seven children, although high mortality rates resulted in a smaller number of surviving children. As the country modernized and mortality levels dropped, women began to have fewer children. In fact, fertility has decreased steadily from 1800 until the present, with the exception of a major, but relatively short-lived reversal during the post-World War II baby boom from about 1947 to 1964. The result is that women are now having about two children, and almost all women are using contraception to plan both the spacing and number of their children.

Family size and childspacing

Figure 3 presents a broad overview of American fertility from 1800 through 1982 for white women, using two measures: the average number of children born to (or expected by) particular birth cohorts of white women and the annual total fertility rate, which indicates the average number of children each woman would have if each were to live through her childbearing lifetime (ages 15-44) bearing children at the same rate as women of those ages actually did in a specific year. Looking first at the total fertility rate, we see that fertility dropped from a high of seven children per woman in 1800 to a low of about 2.1 children during the Depression of the 1930s. Then came the postwar baby boom,

Figure 3. Average Number of Children Ever Born to (or Expected by) Birth Cohorts and Annual Total Fertility Rate, White Women: 1800-1982



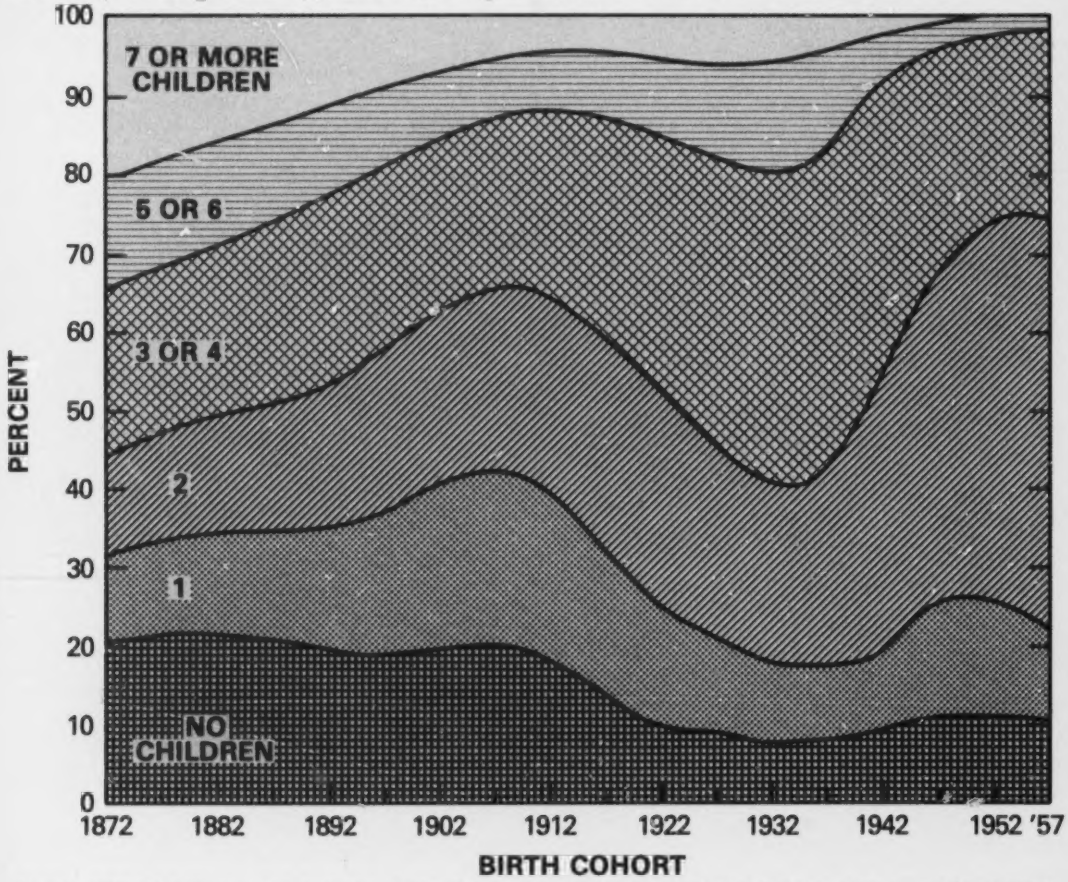
Sources: Total Fertility Rate, 1800-1916: Ansley J. Coale and Melvin Zelnik, *New Estimates of Fertility and Population in the United States* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963) Table 2; 1917-1969: Robert L. Heuser, *Fertility Tables for Birth Cohorts by Color: United States, 1917-73* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1976) Table 1B; 1970-1980: National Center for Health Statistics (NCHS), "Advance Report of Final Natality Statistics, 1980," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*, Vol. 31, No. 8, Supplement, 1982, Table 4; 1981-82: Martin O'Connell, Population Division, Bureau of the Census, personal communication; Children Ever Born: 1872-1927: Heuser, *Fertility Tables*, Tables 5-B and 7-B; 1932-1937: NCHS, *Vital Statistics of the United States 1978*, Vol. 1, *Natality* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982) Table 1-15; 1942-1957: Bureau of the Census, unpublished tabulations from the June 1980 Current Population Survey.

bringing a sharp rise to a peak total fertility rate for white women of 3.6 births per woman in 1957, followed by an equally sharp drop to 1.7 in 1975 where the rate for white women hovered through 1982—substantially below the level of the 1930s.

Fluctuations in fertility over the last half century reflect both shifts in average family size and variation in the timing of childbearing. The actual average completed family size of cohorts of white women increased from about 2.2 for those born around 1910 to about 3.2 for those born during the 1930s who had their children during the baby boom (Figure 3). Average family size will decline to about two children for white women born during the 1950s if they have the number of children they say they expect. Among black women, average completed family size has been consistently higher, increasing from about 2.5 children for women born around 1910 to approximately four for those born in the 1930s. Expected family size for black women born during the 1950s is just over two.[31]

As fertility fluctuated over time, the distribution of family sizes changed markedly. Figure 4 shows that from the co-

Figure 4. Percentage Distribution of Number of Children Ever Born (or Expected), Cohorts of White Women: 1872-1957



Sources: 1872-1927: Heuser, *Fertility Tables*, Tables 5-B and 7-B; 1932-1937: NCHS, *Vital Statistics of the United States 1978*, Table 1-13; 1942-1957: Bureau of the Census, unpublished tabulations from the June 1980 Current Population Survey.

horts of the 1870s through those born around 1910, the decline in the number of children born per woman primarily resulted from a decrease in the proportion of large families and an increase in the share of small families. The percentage of white women with five or more children declined from 35 to 12 percent while the percentage with one to three chilidren increased from about 35 to 60 percent. Meanwhile, the proportion with no children remained fairly steady at about 20 percent.

An important part of the larger average family size of the baby boom mothers, born in the 1930s, was the reduction in childlessness and one-child families; only 20 percent of them had one child or none, as compared to 42 percent among women born in 1910. The baby boom saw a large increase in the percentage of families with three or four children, but only a modest increase in families of five or six and even less increase in very large families. The current reduction in family size, if the expectations of women born in the 1950s materialize, will result only marginally from an increase in childlessness, but rather will be due to a decrease in the percentage of families with more than two children and a substantial increase in two-child families.

The timing of childbearing also varied sharply across cohorts. Women born between 1910 and 1925 had their children at relatively older ages, as a result of postponing childbearing during the 1930s Depression and the wartime years of the early 1940s and catching up during the baby boom years. Women born during the 1930s did the opposite; they had their children early and rapidly during the late 1940s and 1950s and had relatively few children during the late 1960s and 1970s, resulting in a young average age at childbearing.[32] This shift partly reflects the change in age at marriage; women born in the 1930s married earlier in the postwar years than did women who reached adulthood during the depression and wartime years.

The overall trends in fertility have been remarkably uniform for all subgroups of the population. Thus, fertility differentials observed before the baby boom—larger families among blacks and among those with less schooling and those who marry young—appear to have persisted into the 1980s. One exception is Catholic women whose relatively high fertility fell particularly rapidly after the baby boom and is now close to that of non-Catholic women.[33]

Delayed childbearing and childlessness

Whether the cohorts of the 1950s will have the average two children that they tell surveyors they expect is open to question. The proportion who say they expect to have no children is no higher than the percentage of childless women among the prolific cohorts of the 1930s, but their actual current levels of childlessness are close to those of women born at the turn of the century at the same ages. In 1982, 63 percent of women aged 20-24 and 37 percent of women aged 25-29 were still childless—similar to the figures for cohorts born around 1900 but very different from the 50 percent and 19 percent, respectively, for the 1930s cohorts at these ages. Further, the annual probabilities of having a first birth declined rather steadily from 1960 to 1979, due both to the rising age at marriage and lower first birth rates within marriage.[34]

White women have been delaying childbearing more than black women. Some scholars project that as many as 29 percent of white women born during the 1950s may remain childless,[35] despite their plans to the contrary, either because they find that they are unable to have children or because the same reasons that caused them to postpone childbearing lead them in the end to forego children. Thus, an important question is whether these cohorts are only delaying childbearing or will in fact end up with very small families and much childlessness.

If many of these now childless young women do have the children they expect, their average age at first birth will be relatively high by recent standards. Some of these women are beginning to worry that their delay could reduce their chances of a successful pregnancy. Recent studies show that the inability to have children does increase with age, but only modestly before age 35—from about 6 percent unable to bear children at ages 20-24 to 15 percent for women aged 30-34. After age 35, the unfavorable odds increase rapidly, from about 28 percent among women aged 35-39 to 63 percent for those aged 40-44.[36] Many young women have delayed having children because they believe that time out for childrearing could jeopardize their career ambitions; there is little guidance on the optimal strategy for combining family and career for women who want both. Delayed childbearing also could affect the financial position of parents at retirement. Having children later in life could enable a couple to accumulate assets before they start their family, but the burden of college expenses close to parental retirement might deplete retirement savings. Delayed childbearing also could require difficult adjustments if the life style enjoyed while childless is not compatible with childrearing.

Projections of future levels of childlessness are complicated by current changes in birth control technology and in attitudes, values, and norms concerning parenthood and childlessness. Modern contraception and legal abortion make it easier to implement a decision to remain childless, while social norms and values prescribing parenthood have weakened, making it easier to choose to remain childless. A 1962 study of mothers in the Detroit metropolitan area found that 84 percent believed that "almost all married couples who can ought to have children," but 18 years later, in 1980, only 43 percent of these same women agreed with this idea. Similar attitudes were expressed by their young adult children who were also interviewed in 1980. Also, although nearly all the mothers said in 1980 that they would like their children to become parents, only one in eight said they would be bothered a great deal if this did not materialize.[37] That Americans no longer rule out childlessness is further documented by a 1976 national study in which six of ten adults had neutral views about "couples who decide to have no children at all." The same study also revealed a decline in positive orientations toward parenthood and an increase in negative orientations between 1957 and 1976.[38] The age that people consider ideal to have their first child has also gone up—by about half a year, on average, between 1970 and 1975.[39]

Although parenthood has become more optional, there is no evidence of an embracement of childlessness. Substantial portions of Americans continue to value parenthood, believe that childbearing should accompany marriage, and feel social pressure to have children.[40] Only a very small percentage view childlessness as an advantage, regard the decision not to have children as positive, believe that the ideal family is one without children, or expect to be childless by choice.[41] Nevertheless, it is likely that changing values concerning parenthood, the weakening of social norms prescribing marriage and parenthood, a wider range of alternatives for women, the desire to postpone marriage and childbearing, and the availability of modern contraceptives and legal abortion will result in a higher proportion of Americans remaining childless.

The long-term shift from high to low fertility has important implications for society and for family relations. At the societal level, low fertility means both a smaller and an older population. The counterparts of these effects at the family level are fewer kin and a kinship network composed of older relatives. Parents have both fewer children to support and nourish during their childrearing years and fewer children to rely on to support them in old age. Declines in fertility also generally reduce the available number of grandchildren, nieces and nephews, aunts and uncles, and cousins. However, the reduction in numbers of kin through the long-term decline in fertility has been partially offset by reductions in mortality. Also, for the next few decades, the elderly will actually have more children and younger relatives available to help them than they do now, for these will be the parents of the baby boom families. But when the parents of today's small families reach retirement age they will have fewer available younger kin than any of the elderly before them.

Small families can mean that parents have more time and resources for activities other than childrearing. Mothers probably have more time to pursue education, enjoy leisure activities, or to work outside the home. With fewer children to support and frequently income from two earners, parents of small families should be able to provide their children more opportunities and advantages, including advanced education. However, fewer children can also mean less public support for child-oriented services.

Large swings in fertility have widespread social and economic repercussions as well, particularly when the changes attain the dimensions of the baby boom. As the baby boom cohort

matured, the United States incurred massive expenditures for new public schools and then expanded higher education facilities, and has had difficulty accommodating the large cohorts in the labor market. As smaller cohorts of children followed the baby boom generation, communities have abandoned schools no longer needed, while declining enrollments in the universities are anticipated. An important current debate centers on how the already ailing Social Security system can be stretched to cover the baby boom generation when it reaches retirement age and funds must come from the following smaller cohorts in the working ages.

Birth control

The steady decline in fertility from 1800 to 1940 reflects the growing acceptability and use of birth control by American married couples even long before the advent of today's sophisticated contraceptive methods and legal abortion. Sketchy information suggests that at least 40 percent of women born in the 1840s and 60 percent of women born in the 1870s practiced some sort of birth control.[42] Contraceptive use certainly was widespread by the early 20th century. Over 70 percent of women born in the first decade of this century reported using contraception, and many used more than one method. Most common were condoms, the contraceptive douche, and withdrawal; also important were rhythm, the diaphragm, and jelly or cream.[43] These methods were effective enough to bring the birth rate to the low level of the 1930s when these women were in their prime childbearing years.

However, the "modern" contraceptive era began only during the 1960s when many American couples shifted from traditional methods to sterilization, the oral contraceptive pill, and the intrauterine device (IUD). Acceptance of the pill, first introduced in 1960, was rapid and widespread. Nearly one-fourth of all contracepting couples were using the pill by 1965 and 36 percent by 1973. Pill usage then dropped to about 33 percent in 1976 (the last year for which information is available)—probably due to concern about side effects. Less popular was the IUD, although 10 percent of contracepting married couples were using it by the mid-1970s.[44]

Sterilization has become an important contraceptive method in the past two decades, particularly among older couples who have completed their families. Among all contracepting couples, the proportion reporting a contraceptive sterilization was still only 12 percent in 1965 but more than doubled to 27 percent by 1976. By that year, 40 percent of contracepting couples with the wife aged 30-44 had adopted this non-reversible method, with the operations divided nearly equally between husbands and wives.[45]

Since its legalization nationwide by the Supreme Court in 1973, abortion has become an especially important and common form of fertility control in the United States. From close to 900,000 in 1974, the year after the Supreme Court ruling, legal abortions mounted rapidly to 1.55 million performed in 1980, although the annual increase slowed to just 1 percent between 1979 and 1980.[46] Nearly 3 percent of all women of childbearing age had an abortion in 1980, representing about three abortions for every seven births; about one-third of these 1980 abortions were at least second abortions for the women concerned.

Although still not "perfect," modern birth control has helped reduce the incidence of unplanned and unwanted fertility which was still considerable in the 1950s, despite the widespread availability and usage of contraceptives. This in itself probably accounts for much of the overall fertility decline after 1960.[47] Beyond that, the availability of highly effective contraceptive methods and legal abortion has probably altered orientations toward childbearing. Traditional contraceptive methods were effective in reducing overall fertility, but their substantial failure rates made it difficult for

couples to plan confidently the timing and number of their children. For most women, motherhood has now become a matter of choice so that couples can rationally integrate their childbearing decisions with education and career plans, which makes possible the fuller and more effective participation of women in the labor market. As women work outside the home and gain satisfaction from it, the competing demands of children may seem costlier. Thus, the contraceptive revolution and legal abortion have probably helped reduce desired family size as well as unplanned childbearing.[48]

Sexual Activity and Childbearing Among the Unmarried

Increased sexual activity and childbearing among the unmarried have had important repercussions on both families and American society. Childbearing among unmarried women is the other reason, along with marital separation, for the growth in families headed by women on their own. It has also sparked controversy about the legitimacy of public programs to help sexually active teenagers avoid unwanted pregnancies. Of course, premarital sexual activity and out-of-wedlock childbearing are not new in this country, as shown by limited historical data, but both are now much more prevalent and thus of growing social concern.

Sexual activity among unmarried teenagers

As Table 1 documents, premarital sexual activity among teenagers was already widespread in 1971 and increased steadily during the 1970s. Among never-married women aged 15-19 interviewed in metropolitan areas, 28 percent of the total and 46 percent of the 19-year-olds reported in 1971 that they had had sexual intercourse. By 1979, the figures were 46 percent for the 15-19-year-old never-married women as a group, 69 percent for the 19-year-olds, and 78 percent for never-married men aged 19. Most of this rise was accounted for by increased premarital sexual activity among white teenagers, although in 1979, the proportion of black never-married teenage women reporting that they had had sexual intercourse (65 percent) was still much higher than the 42 percent reported by their white counterparts.[49]

Attitudes toward premarital sex also have become less restrictive over the last decade. The proportion of American adults agreeing that it is "always" or "almost always" wrong for a man and woman to have sexual relations before marriage dropped from 49 to 38 percent between 1972 and 1982. At the same time, however, the proportion who feel that extramarital sex—"a married person

Table 1. Sexual Activity and Premarital Pregnancy and Its Resolution Among Metropolitan Area Women Aged 15-19: 1971, 1976, 1979

(Numbers in percent)

Characteristics	1971	1976	1979
Never-married women who ever had intercourse	28	39	46
All women who were ever pregnant before marriage	8	13	16
Premaritally pregnant women who married before resolution of pregnancy	33	23	16
Premaritally pregnant women who terminated pregnancy by abortion while still unmarried	23	32	37

Source: Melvin Zelnik and John F. Kantner, "Sexual Activity, Contraceptive Use and Pregnancy Among Metropolitan Area Teenagers: 1971-1979," *Family Planning Perspectives*, Vol. 12, No. 5 (September/October 1980) pp. 230-237.

having sex with someone other than their spouse"—is always or almost always wrong remained consistently high at around 85 percent.[50]

Contraception

From 1976 to 1979, the proportion of premaritally sexually active teenage women who said they had always used contraception rose from 29 to 34 percent, while those saying that they had never used contraception dropped from 36 to 27 percent. Teenagers also reported more use of the most effective contraceptive methods—the pill and the IUD—between 1971 and 1976, although there was a return to less effective traditional methods, especially withdrawal, by 1979.[51]

Despite this increase in contraceptive use during the 1970s, a large proportion of sexually active teenagers remains unprotected, particularly at first intercourse, and practice tends to be careless and sporadic among those who do use contraception. The explanation does not seem to be a dearth of services, since government-supported clinics have provided services to teenagers in most areas in recent years. Nor do most unmarried teenage women fail to use contraception because they want a child; only one in five premaritally pregnant teenagers interviewed in 1979 said they had wanted to get pregnant.[52] Apparently many are unrealistic about the risks of getting pregnant, while some are unwilling to admit to their degree of sexual involvement and prefer to view intercourse as an unexpected, irresistible occurrence rather than an anticipated event.

Pregnancy

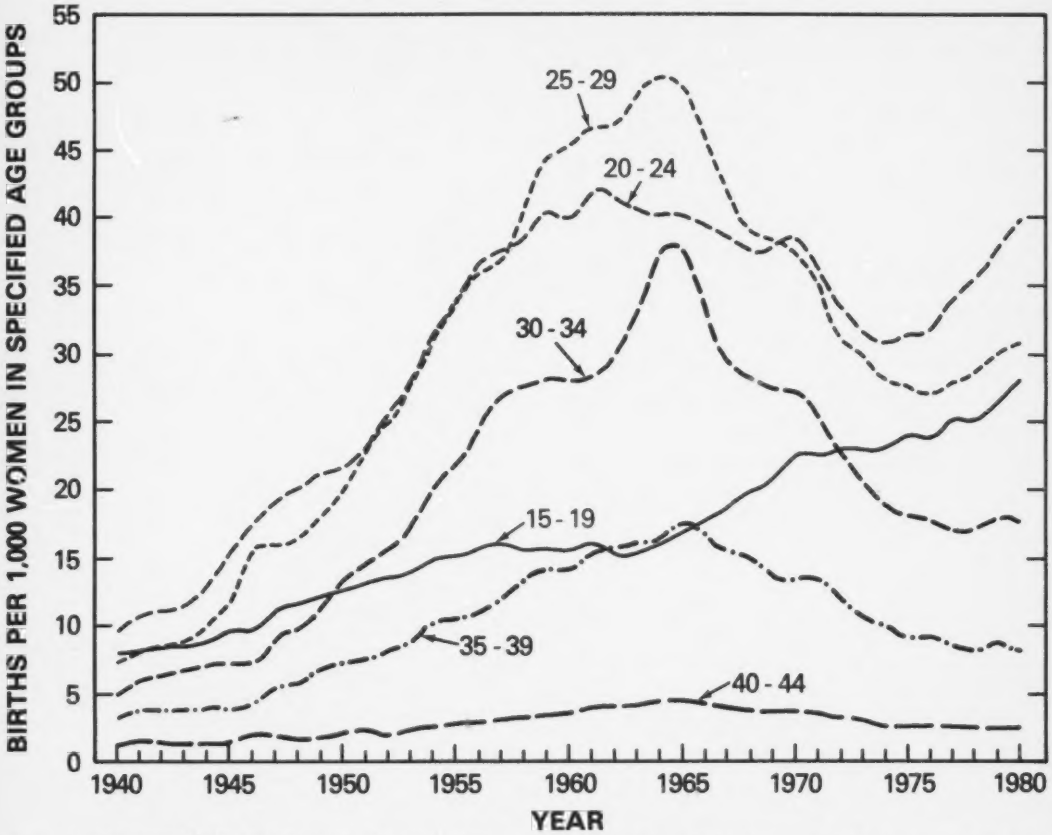
With the increase in sexual activity outstripping the increase in effective contraceptive practice, the proportion of all women aged 15-19 reporting that they had been premaritally pregnant doubled from 8 to 16 percent between 1971 and 1979 (Table 1). Again, this percentage in 1979 was higher for blacks (30 percent) than for whites (14 percent). However, premarital conceptions went up 141 percent for white adolescents in the 1970s, compared to an increase of only 19 percent among black teenagers.

Harold M. Lambert

By 1979, the proportion of never-married 19-year-olds in metropolitan areas reporting that they had had sexual intercourse was 69 percent for women and 78 percent for men.

Teenagers have changed their responses to pregnancy. Nearly one-third of the premaritally pregnant teenagers interviewed in 1971 married before their expected delivery date; by 1979, the proportion had dropped to 16 percent. At the same time, among the premaritally pregnant who chose not to marry, the percentage who terminated the pregnancy by abortion increased from 23 to 37 percent (Table 1). Nationwide, the abortion rate for teenagers increased from 27 abortions per 1,000 women under age 20 in 1974 to 43 per 1,000 in 1980; 30 percent of all abortions in 1980 were obtained by teenagers.[53] The abortion rate for all unmarried women also rose markedly over these six years, from 33 to 55 per 1,000, compared to an increase only from 9 to 11 per 1,000 for married women. By 1980, 79 percent of all abor-

Figure 5. Birth Rates for Unmarried Women, by Age: 1940-1980



Sources: 1940-1969: NCHS, *Vital Statistics of the United States 1975*, Vol. 1, *Natality* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1978) Table 1-30; 1970-1980: NCHS, "Advance Report of Final Natality Statistics, 1980," Table 16.

tions were obtained by unmarried women.

Out-of-wedlock childbearing

As Figure 5 shows, the birth rate for unmarried women aged 15-19 rose almost uninterruptedly from 1940 through 1980, due primarily to the rise in premarital pregnancies among adolescent women and their lesser inclination to legitimize births by marriage. In 1980, the birth rate for unmarried black teenagers was still nearly six times the rate for whites, but out-of-wedlock childbearing actually declined slightly among black teenagers during the 1970s, while the rate for white teenagers went up nearly 50 percent.

In contrast to the trend in out-of-wedlock childbearing, the birth rate for the *total* group of teenage women—the married plus the unmarried—has declined since the peak of the baby boom in the late 1950s. The reasons for these discrepant trends are that many fewer teenagers are married today, which lowers overall fertility, and the fertility of married teenagers has fallen in concert with the decline in the marital fertility of older women. In fact, the decline in *overall* teenage fertility has been significant enough that the percentage of all children born to teenage women declined from 19 to 16 percent between 1974 and 1980.[54]

Fertility rates also increased markedly for older unmarried women between 1940 and the early 1960s but then turned down, paralleling the trend in marital fer-

tility (Figure 5). The downturn continued through 1980 for unmarried women aged 30 and over but there was an increase in the late 1970s for women in their twenties. The share of all out-of-wedlock births occurring to women aged 20 and over rose from 47 to 59 percent between 1974 and 1980 because of the increase in fertility among unmarried women in their twenties, the rise in age at marriage, and the "aging" of the baby boom cohort into their twenties, which both increased the number of women in their twenties and decreased the number of teenagers.[55] The birth rate for the total group of unmarried women has risen fairly steadily since 1940 because of the steady rise in the rate for teenagers, who are the preponderant group of unmarried women.

There is little to document the trend in sexual activity among older unmarried women, either those who have still never married or the separated, divorced, or widowed. Figure 5, however, shows that the childbearing rates of unmarried women in their twenties exceed the rate for teenagers. Studies have shown that the fertility rate for previously married women is not insignificant, though well below that of continuously married women. In 1976, a substantial 54 percent of previously married women reported that they were using contraception or had been sterilized, and contraceptive use had risen more for these women than for currently married women between 1973 and 1976.[56] It is also known that previously married women are more likely than never-married women to cohabit without marriage.

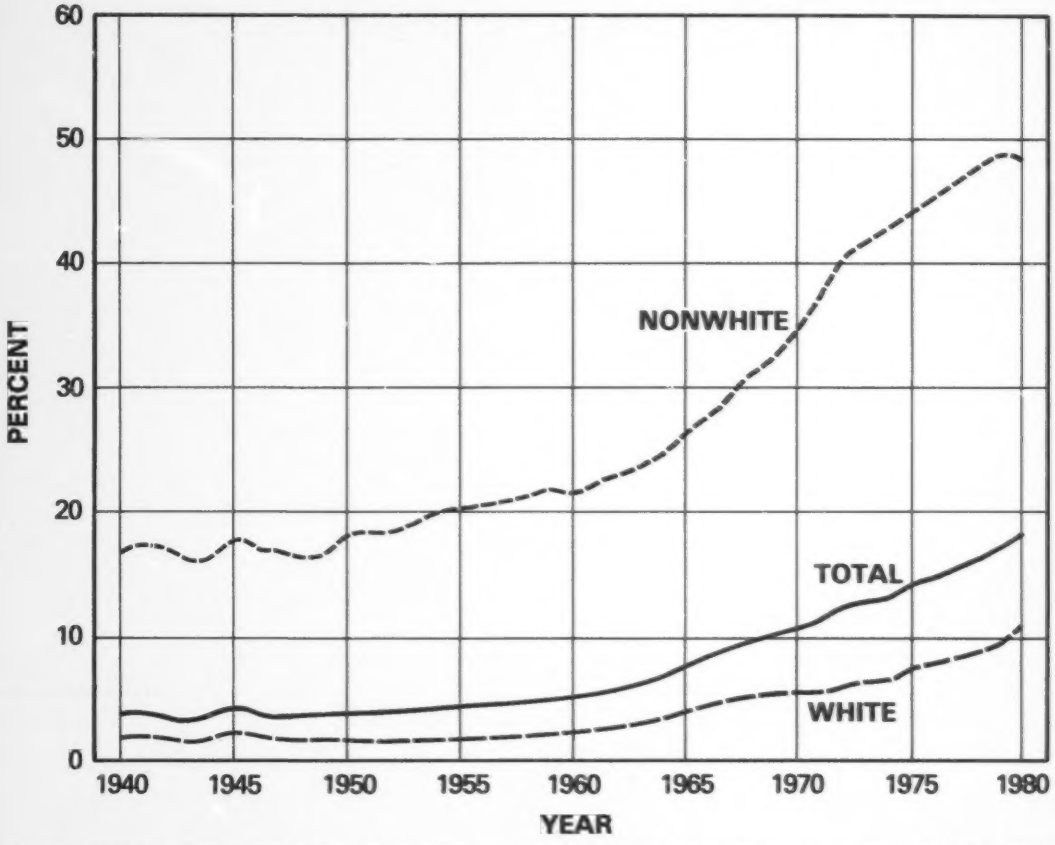
The increase in both the percentage of women who are unmarried and their rate of childbearing, coupled with the downturn in the fertility rate of married women, has sharply increased the percentage of all American births occurring out of wedlock in the past two decades (Figure 6, page 22). Between 1940 and 1960, the proportion of babies born to unmarried mothers fluctuated at 4 to 5 percent, but by 1980, the share had more than tripled to 18 percent. In 1980, out-of-wedlock births made up nearly half (48 percent) of total births to nonwhite women (of whom more than 90 percent are black), while the comparable figures for whites was 11 percent. Among teenage women in 1980, the proportion of out-of-wedlock births was 85 percent for blacks and 33 percent for whites.

The trend in nonmarital fertility among teenagers is especially troubling because many of the significant health risks and social and economic disadvantages associated with teenage childbearing are particularly serious for unmarried teenagers. Mortality risks are higher for both baby and mother when the mother is a teenager than they are when the mother is in her twenties. Though government-mandated programs now keep more pregnant teenagers in school, adolescent mothers still receive less education than other adolescents. This, along with child-care problems in often fatherless homes, can impede their search for and commitment to a job, which in turn increases the chances that they will find themselves on welfare.[57] The difficulties often multiply because women who start childbearing in their teens tend to have more births subsequently than women who delay childbearing until their twenties.

Adoption

Adoption can provide children of unmarried mothers the advantages of a home with two, better educated parents and a higher standard of living.[58] Scarce data indicate that adoptions increased in the 1950s and 1960s but declined during the early 1970s, despite the continuing sizable number of children born out of wedlock and sharp increase in their proportion of all births. Apparently unmarried women now more often opt to raise their children on their own.[59] This has reduced the number of children available for adoption—a shortage that could intensify if many of the women who are now delaying childbearing discover that they cannot bear a child and attempt

Figure 6. Percent of Children Born out of Wedlock: 1940-1980



Sources: 1940-1978: NCHS, *Vital Statistics of the United States 1978*, Table 1-31; 1979: NCHS, "Advance Report of Final Natality Statistics, 1979," *Monthly Vital Statistics Report*, Vol. 30, No. 6, Supplement (2), 1981, Table 13; 1980: NCHS, "Advance Report of Final Natality Statistics, 1980," Table 15.

to adopt. Recent cases of the use of "surrogate" mothers to bear a child for an adopting couple are a new response to this shortage. Though still rare, this practice is apparently growing and has raised concern in several states because of its ethical and legal ramifications.

Sexually transmitted disease

The incidence of sexually transmitted diseases has grown in recent years, reflecting largely the growth in numbers of unmarried adults and their increased sexual activity. Modern medicine and serious control efforts have successfully combatted some venereal diseases; the incidence of syphilis dropped to all-time lows in the late 1970s, although the early 1980s brought some signs of an upturn. Reported cases of gonorrhea, however, rose dramatically during the 1960s and early 1970s, and although the number then leveled off and even declined somewhat, the 1980 rate was still three times the rate in 1960. Other such diseases, such as genital herpes, also appear to have increased rapidly during the 1970s.[60] Certainly, sexually transmitted diseases continue to be a serious health problem and affect the way Americans approach the formation of relationships.

Public policy

Considerable public controversy has centered on abortion and the provision of contraceptive services to unmarried

teenagers. Following court decisions of the 1960s and early 1970s that lifted historical restrictions on abortion and the dissemination of contraceptives, the federal government has provided support for freely available contraceptive services. Several groups view provision of these services to teenagers as government intrusion on the rights of parents to supervise the behavior of their minor children. For them, the solution for adolescent pregnancy lies in familial control and parental guidance to restrict teenagers' sexual activity, which, they feel, is encouraged by freely available contraceptive services. Others doubt that adolescent sexual activity can be substantially decreased, despite parental efforts, particularly given growing sexual activity and cohabitation among older unmarried people. In their view, restricting contraceptive services for teenagers would increase teenage childbearing with all its negative implications.

Sex education in public schools provokes similar arguments. Some groups feel that sex education in schools encourages sexual activity and is best left to parents. However, more than two out of three Americans support sex education in schools, and some of them, noting young people's lack of sexual knowledge,[61] argue that additional information would allow adolescents to deal more wisely with their sexuality. One recent study suggests that sex education in public schools does not lead to more sexual experience.[62]

Public issues regarding abortion are not limited to adolescents. The right of all women to obtain an abortion, established by the 1973 Supreme Court decision, has been under attack by groups who champion the rights of the unborn. Supporters of the 1973 decision contend that the ability to control fertility is a fundamental right for every woman and that the elimination of the abortion option would result in more unwanted births and more recourse to illegal and potentially dangerous abortion, especially among unmarried teenagers.

The complexity of the abortion issue is reflected in the attitudes of individual Americans. In 1982, the overwhelming majority approved of legal abortion if the woman's health is seriously endangered by the pregnancy (92 percent), if she became pregnant as a result of rape (87 percent), or if there is a strong chance of serious defect in the baby (84 percent). But only about half approved of abortion if the family has a very low income and cannot afford more children, if the woman is unmarried and does not want to marry the man, or if she is married and wants no more children. Just over 40 percent of Americans approve of all six of these reasons for abortion, while only some 7 percent disapprove of all six—a substantial change from 1965 when only 11 percent approved of all six reasons and 22 percent disapproved all six. The increase in approval, however, occurred primarily between 1965 and 1973 and there has been little change since then.[63]

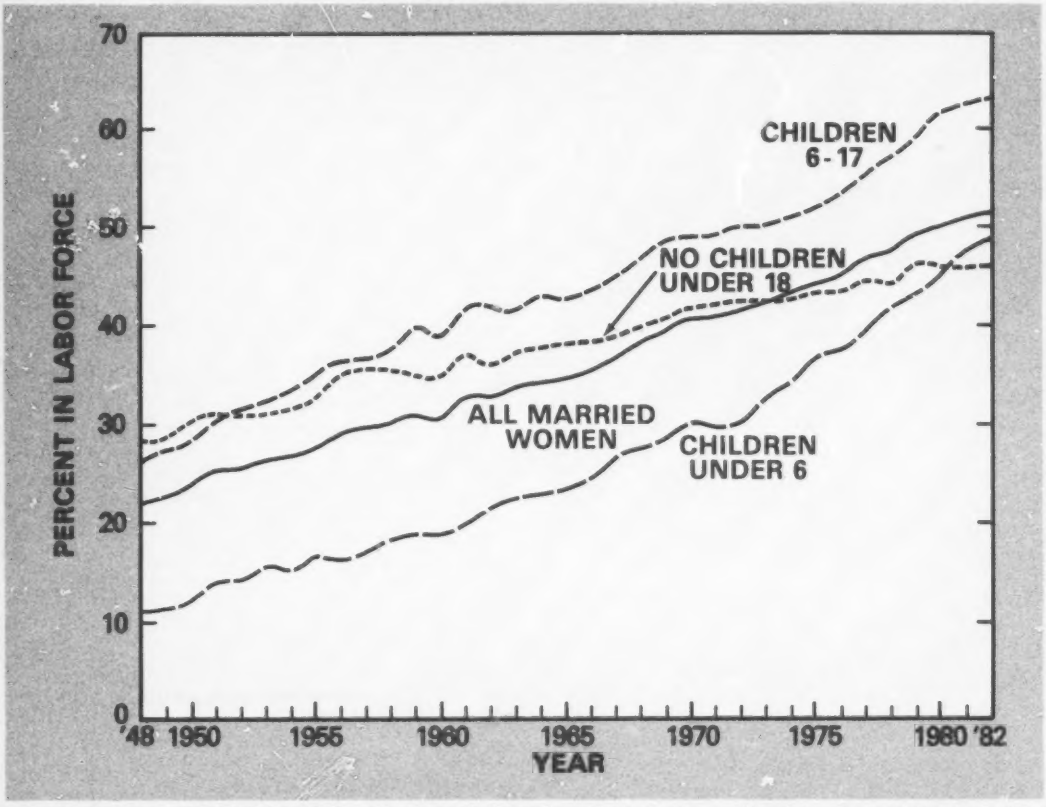
Roles of Wives and Husbands

Wives in the labor force

Historically, American women worked to provide for their families, not only by maintaining the home but also by directly contributing to the family's livelihood. Even in the last decades of the 19th century some 40 percent of the nation's population lived on farms, where wives and daughters helped with farmwork and, as part of their housework, tended the garden, processed the family's food, and clothed the family, all without benefit of electricity. In urban areas, many wives were able to earn money by working at home or taking in boarders and lodgers. Single women often worked outside the home for pay, but most wives confined their work efforts to their homes.[64]

The industrialization of America in the late 1800s and early 1900s shifted the primary locus of employment from the household to the marketplace, reducing

Figure 7. Labor Force Participation Rates of Married Women, by Presence and Age of Children: 1948-1982



Sources: Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS), *Labor Force Statistics Derived from the Current Population Survey: A Databook*, Vol. 1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982) Table C-11, p. 716; and unpublished data from the BLS, September 1983.

women's option of combining employment with care of the home. At the same time, the increase in real income made it feasible for most wives to devote their time solely to housekeeping. As a result, even as recently as 1940, only about a quarter of all women aged 16 and over and just 14 percent of married women were in the labor force.[65]

A veritable revolution occurred in women's work patterns after World War II. By 1982, more than half of all women aged 16 and over (53 percent) were working for pay or looking for a job outside the home.[66] Married women have accounted for most of this increase in labor force participation (51 percent were employed in 1982), and among married women the most rapid increase took place among mothers of preschool children (Figure 7). In 1948, just 11 percent of married mothers with children under six were in the labor force; by 1982, the figure was up to 49 percent. Although the decision to work continues to be strongly linked to family financial need, the largest relative increase in female labor force participation since 1960 has occurred among wives with high-earning husbands.[67]

Despite this surge of married women into the labor force, their work patterns still differ markedly from men's. During 1978, 81 percent of husbands in the prime working ages (25-54) worked full time for the entire year but only 28 percent of wives in this age range did so.[68] Married women are more likely than mar-

ried men to work part time and take time out from the labor force, usually for family-related reasons. Some economists assert that these gender differences in work patterns account for the lower earnings of women, which are only 60 percent of what men earn.[69] Other scholars argue that wage discrimination also accounts for much of the earnings gap; evidence suggests that even career women who work full time earn less than men in similar jobs.[70]

Women workers typically have been segregated into low-paying "female jobs," such as teaching, social work, and clerical work—another reason for their lower average earnings. But many American women are now working at what used to be men's jobs. Women have become the majority in such traditionally male-dominated categories as insurance adjustors and real estate brokers. Even where women still are a minority, the gains have been impressive: from 4 percent of the nation's lawyers and judges in 1972 to 14 percent in 1981, and from 10 to 14 percent of physicians over the same nine years.[71]

Women's growing involvement in paid employment outside the home has been accompanied by a notable shift in attitudes concerning appropriate roles for women and men. Traditional attitudes defined the home as the locus for women's work and fulfillment, thereby reinforcing the existing division of labor, but current attitudes support a much broader range of activities for women. Some Americans now expect rather than discourage outside employment for wives. Americans also increasingly believe that women should not only be able to pursue outside interests and careers, but also have equal access to education and good jobs, receive equal pay for equal work, and have the same opportunities as men for political office. This is paralleled by more stress on equal authority for women within the home. These attitudes have continued to broaden along with women's roles, despite the conservative movement of the late 1970s and early 1980s with its emphasis on traditional male-female roles.[72]

Art Haupt

Over half of all married women, including 49 percent of mothers of preschool children, now hold a paid job outside the home.

Although attitudes increasingly permit women's full participation in activities outside the home, there is still strong support for a fundamental specialization and division of labor between wives and husbands. Young Americans continue to believe that men should always be involved in full-time employment, while women should combine work and family responsibilities, with the mix depending on the family's needs and circumstances, especially whether or not there are children and their ages. Despite the recent spate of press stories on "new men," there is little interest in a reversal of sex roles, with husbands assuming primary responsibility for home and child care while wives specialize in market work. For this aspect of sex roles, attitudes have changed the least in recent years.[73]

American family life has changed greatly now that so many wives have gone to work outside the home. New problems have arisen—care for the children while mother works, hectic work schedules for wives who manage both home and a job, and marital adjustments

Table 2. Child-Care Arrangements for Children Under Age Six of Ever-Married Mothers Working Full Time: 1958, 1977

(Numbers in percent)

Child-care arrangements	1958	1977[a]
Total	100.0	100.0
Care in child's home	56.6	28.6
by father	14.7	10.6
by other relative	27.7	11.4
by nonrelative	14.2	6.6
Care in another home	27.1	47.4
by relative	14.5	20.8
by nonrelative	12.7	26.6
Group care center	4.5	14.6
Child cares for self	0.6	0.3
Mother cares for child while working (and all other arrangements)	11.2	9.0

Source: Marjorie Lueck, Ann Orr, and Martin O'Connell, "Trends in Childcare Arrangements of Working Mothers," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-23, No. 117, 1982, Table A, p.2.

[a]Data for two youngest children under age 5.

Note: Data refer to child-care arrangements only while the mother is working.

to the wife's new status as well as her crowded schedule. Women's work also benefits many families, by bringing in income for necessities or extras and by providing mothers with a sense of well-being, which is often shared by their husbands and children.

Child care

Working mothers with school-age children find it easiest to handle child care by confining work to school hours, finding someone for after-school care, or allowing older children to care for themselves after school. Working mothers with preschool children use a variety of child-care arrangements (Table 2). In 1977, 29 percent of children under six whose mothers worked full time were cared for during the day in their own homes, 47 percent were cared for in the homes of others, and 15 percent were taken to group care centers. This is a marked change from 1958 when over half of such children were cared for in their own homes. Since 1958, care in other people's homes has almost doubled while the use of group care centers has tripled. A large proportion of working mothers (57 percent) pay for child care, particularly if they work full time (66 percent)[74]

Arranging for care in children's own homes has become more difficult since neighbors and relatives often are now out working themselves. Home care is even less feasible for the large number of divorced women who have lost the father's assistance and often that of "in-laws" as well. This is reflected in the fact that more unmarried than married women pay for child care, and unmarried mothers, who can probably least afford it, are the greatest users of group care centers. The decline in home-based care has occurred in every socioeconomic group. However, higher income families more often use group care centers as a substitute rather than the homes of relatives, while blacks and other races use relatives for child care much more often than whites—45 percent compared to 26 percent[75]

Are the children of working mothers adversely affected by their mothers' absence? Undoubtedly, the effect of mothers' work on their children depends on the adequacy and consistency of the child care provided, and the amount and quality of time parents spend with their children when they are not working. Thus, it is difficult to assess the net affect of women's work on the well-being of children. Nevertheless, most studies indicate that any differences between children of working and nonworking mothers are quite small.[76]

Coordinating family and work roles

Working wives use many strategies to cope with the demands on their time.

They spend less time doing housework, probably expend more effort in the hours available for housework, enjoy less rest and leisure, and utilize some of the wide array of convenience foods now sold in supermarkets. Time-use studies, which aggregate both market work and work at home, have shown only small differences between the total work time of employed married men and women. In 1965, employed husbands averaged 60 total work hours per week, compared to 67 hours for employed wives. By 1975, total workloads had decreased and the average work hours of employed married women and men were almost the same at about 55-57 hours per week. In each period, women bore more than two-thirds of the home workload, but men averaged considerably more time on the job, since many working wives work only part time. Among full-time workers in 1975, wives registered more total work time (64 hours per week) than husbands did (61 hours), despite less time spent on their outside jobs, because they still did most of the housework, particularly cooking, cleaning, and laundry chores.[77] The total work time of nonworking wives was considerably lower and remained virtually unchanged at about 53 hours from 1920 to 1965, but then dropped sharply to 45 hours in the 1970s.[78] Housewives have adopted some of the time-saving strategies used by working wives, such as family meals eaten out, which several studies have shown to be now as frequent for families where wives do not work as for those where they do.[79]

The money earned by wives often makes an important contribution to family incomes in the United States. In 1982, the median income of married-couple families with a working wife ($30,300) was more than 40 percent higher than the median for such families where the wife was not in the paid labor force ($21,300). The median percentage of family income earned by all working wives in 1978 was 26 percent, and was 38 percent when wives worked full time all year. In families at the low end of the income scale, the wife's contribution is much more sizable—a median contribution as high as 64 percent in the poorest group. In fact, relatively few dual-earner families now fall below the poverty level, with one reason being the wife's contribution to family income.[80] For more affluent families, the wife's income can make possible the purchase of a home, sending the children to college, the purchase of appliances to make housework easier, and vacation trips. A wife's earnings can also provide a cushion against the husband's unemployment or give the husband the freedom to try a new business venture.

Mary Kent

A father and daughter help with the home workload, but working wives are still expected to shoulder primary responsibility for home and child care.

Research has not demonstrated a clear relationship between the employment of wives and marital satisfaction.[81] It is likely that for many couples the advantages of a second income and additional opportunities for the wife's fulfillment outweigh the increased responsibilities associated with her work-

ing, while for others the balance is negative. The effect of a wife's employment is probably related to her reasons for working, the kind of job she has, her husband's attitude toward her employment, the demands of her work, and the amount and nature of her other family responsibilities. Although employment outside the home does not necessarily enhance or detract from marital satisfaction, a wife's job does provide extra resources which can facilitate divorce in an unhappy marriage.

Ramifications beyond the family

Local communities have also been affected by wives' new work patterns. Security problems can mount when homes are empty all day. One study has shown that the increase in burglaries is positively related over time to the increase in the percentage of wives and female household heads who work outside the home.[82] Volunteer workers for nonprofit organizations also may become less available as women enter paid employment. Studies have shown that working women are less likely to do volunteer work than nonworking women.[83] Neighborhood socializing may also decline as a result of the busier schedules of working couples and a shift in the center of social life toward the office and away from home.

The surge of women into the labor market has also had an important impact on the national scene, both on the business community and on government policy. A growing number of companies are targeting their product mix toward goods and services designed for working women. Fast food firms have proliferated and new firms offer to clean homes, run errands, and provide other services to this new and lucrative market. Exploiting this market has produced new marketing strategies. Companies have adopted advertisements which stress utility and time-saving rather than spotless floors and dishes, and even portray husbands and children helping with household chores. On the labor front, companies have had to adapt their hiring procedures to conform with equal employment opportunity laws and consider revisions in policies regarding pregnancy leave, flexible working hours, and transfers where two working spouses are involved.

Government policies too have been affected. Government programs designed prior to the influx of married women into the paid labor force entailed an implicit assumption that each family unit includes only one earner. As a result, federal income tax laws can impose a marriage penalty on a couple with two incomes, who sometimes pay considerably more taxes than they would if they lived together without being married. The 1982 tax law, which takes full effect in 1983, alleviates but does not eliminate the marriage penalty; the tax liabilities of about 19 million couples would still be lower if they were allowed to file as single individuals.[84] Social Security also discriminates against two-earner couples, in that a one-earner couple may receive considerably larger retirement benefits than couples with the same total earnings record, where each spouse has earned an equal amount, and the inequality widens for survivor benefits.[85]

Women workers have sought to eliminate gender considerations in private retirement benefits; Social Security benefits already are gender neutral. The Supreme Court in 1983 eliminated gender as a factor in the determination of benefits from an employer-sponsored pension plan.[86]

Finally, the involvement of women outside the home—both increased education and work—may have a substantial impact on the political process itself. The gap between men's and women's involvement and interest in the political arena has closed in recent years, with the percentage of women who now vote equaling that of men. The increased political activity of women is particularly important because, on average, women differ significantly from men on such issues as national defense and economic

policy.[87] Although the Equal Rights Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was not adopted, despite being favored by a majority of both men and women,[88] women's rights and appropriate roles for men and women continue to be important political issues.

Household Structure and Living Arrangements

Historically, most American households have been predominantly nuclear, containing only one married couple. Although it was not uncommon for a young married couple to live with parents early in marriage and for an older couple to live with a married child, joint families, with more than one married couple from the same generation sharing the same household, were rare. Nevertheless, American households were often complex; a conjugal family of parents and their minor children frequently shared their living facilities with additional persons—both relatives and others. Widowed parents often lived with their married children. In early America, many young persons both lived and worked in the households of relatives or others. Later, in the 19th century, many young persons still were to be found living with other families, but usually just as boarders or lodgers.

Over the years, American households have changed in several important ways. Households have become smaller and less complex, and there has been an increasing trend toward independent living among young unmarried persons, the elderly, and mothers with no current spouse.

Household size

The size of American households has declined almost uninterruptedly since the first census was taken in 1790. As shown in Table 3, average household size in 1980 (2.75 persons) was less than half the average of 1790 (5.79) and over 40 percent less than in 1900 (4.76). Prior to 1900, the decline in household size was primarily due to the replacement of very large households of six or more individuals with households of two to four persons. From 1900 to 1950, the biggest change was the decline in households with five or more persons and the increase in two-person households. One-person households, previously a rarity, made their first substantial gain during

Table 3. Household Size: 1790-1980

(Percentage distribution of households by number of persons)

Number of persons	1790	1900	1930	1940	1950	1960	1970	1980
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
One	4	5	8	7	11	13	17	23
Two	8	15	23	25	29	28	29	31
Three	11	18	21	22	22	19	17	17
Four	14	17	18	18	18	18	16	15
Five	14	14	12	12	10	11	10	8
Six or more	49	31	18	16	10	11	11	6
Average persons per household	5.79	4.76	4.11	3.67	3.37	3.33	3.14	2.75

Sources: Bureau of the Census, *Historical Statistics of the United States, Colonial Times to 1970*, Part 1 (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1975) Series A291 and A335-349, p. 42, and "Provisional Estimates of Social, Economic and Housing Characteristics," *1980 Census of Population and Housing, Supplementary Report* (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1982) Table P-1, p. 3.

Table 4. Living Arrangements of Married and Unmarried Persons Aged 65 and Over: 1900, 1962, 1975

(Numbers in percent)

Living arrangements	Married			Unmarried		
	1900	1962	1975	1900	1962	1975
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100
Alone or with spouse only	29	79	84	11	48	67
With married child	16	2	1	38	14	7
With unmarried child	42	15	10	27	20	10
With other relatives	7	3	5	13	12	13
With nonrelatives	6	1	0	11	6	3

Sources: Daniel Scott Smith, "Historic Change in the Household Structure of the Elderly in Economically Developed Countries," in Robert W. Fogel, et al (eds.), *Aging: Stability and Change in the Family* (New York: Academic Press, 1981) Table 5.A1, p. 110; Ethel Shanas, et al, *Old People in Three Industrial Societies* (New York: Arno Press, 1980) Table VII-2, p. 186; and Ethel Shanas, *Final Report, National Survey of the Aged*, University of Illinois at Chicago Circle, January 1978, Table 5-7, p. 55.

Note: Because data collection procedures used in 1900 differed from those of 1962 and 1975, it is possible only to make general comparisons between 1900 and the other two years.

this period. Since 1950, the predominant trends have been a large gain in single-person households to 23 percent of the total in 1980 and a drop in households with more than two members.

An important element in the reduction in household size prior to World War II was the decline in fertility. Couples raised fewer children and were younger at the birth of their last child. With fewer children, the relative number of large households declined steadily and substantially. Since parents also reached the "empty nest" stage earlier and enjoyed greater longevity, they experienced a longer period with no children at home. Elderly married couples without adult children in their homes also became more prevalent as young adults established their own households earlier. Although data deficiencies prevent precise comparisons, Table 4 suggests that this change has been substantial; the percentage of married couples over age 65 with unmarried children in the home declined from more than 40 percent in 1900 to about 15 percent in 1962,and was only 10 percent in 1975.

Another important change in living arrangements is the virtual disappearance of the practice of living in a household as a boarder, lodger, servant, or employee. In the last half of the 19th century, when the country was urbanizing rapidly and housing was scarce, as many as 15 to 20 percent of urban households included lodgers, many of whom were young persons making the transition to adulthood. At present, less than 5 percent of households contain boarders.[89]

Independent living

Since 1950, most of the decline in household size has been due to a dramatic trend toward "independent" living. Just between 1970 and 1983, the number of new American households grew 33 percent—from 63 to 84 million—while the total population grew only 14 percent in these 13 years.[90] In record numbers, young people were leaving the parental nest after school and before marriage to set up their own households, alone or with friends of their own or the opposite sex; retirees chose to live on in their old homes or move to a new apartment or a retirement community rather than move in with children; spouses moving out after a divorce (usually the husband) opted to set up their own households rather than join others; and never-married, separated, or divorced mothers also chose to keep or set up separate households for themselves and their children.

Table 5. Never-Married Men and Women Aged 25-34 Maintaining Their Own Households: 1950, 1960, 1970, 1982

(Numbers in percent)

Living arrangements	Men				Women			
	1950	1960	1970	1982	1950	1960	1970	1982
Total maintaining own household	9.5	19.4	31.1	42.7	11.0	21.1	35.2	53.3
Living with family members	4.6	4.3	4.5	4.1	3.6	6.7	11.9	16.8
Living alone or with nonrelatives	4.9	15.1	26.6	38.6	7.4	14.4	23.3	36.5

Sources: Bureau of the Census, "Marital Status," *1950 Population Census Report P-E*, No. 2D, Preprint of Vol. IV, Part 2, chap. D (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1953) Table 1, p. 18, "Persons by Family Characteristics," *U.S. Census of Population: 1960, Final Report*, PC(2)-4B (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1964) Table 2, p. 10, "Persons by Family Characteristics," *U.S. Census of Population: 1970*, PC(2)-4B (Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1973) pp. 12 and 17, and "Marital Status and Living Arrangements: March 1982," *Current Population Reports*, Series P-20, No. 380, 1983, Table 6, pp. 36 and 37.

Note: 1950, 1960, and 1970 data come from decennial censuses, while 1982 data are from the Census Bureau's Current Population Survey and are not strictly comparable.

One type of independent living is now virtually universal—newly married couples immediately setting up their own households rather than living for a time in a parental household, which was still not uncommon in 1950. By 1978, only 2 percent of married couples with the husband aged 25-34 did not maintain an independent household, down from 10 percent in 1950.[91]

Table 5 illustrates young American adults' dramatic shift to independent living before marriage. Between 1950 and 1982, the percentage of never-married people aged 25-34 maintaining their own households more than quadrupled for both men (9.5 to 42.7 percent) and women (11.0 to 53.3 percent). For men, a shift to living alone or with unrelated persons accounted for all the increase. For women, the increase included a fivefold increase in the percentage of never-married women heading a family household—a reflection of the increase in premarital childbearing, more single mothers rearing their own children, and their greater tendency to live apart from parents and other relatives. The figures in Table 5 actually understate the trend toward independent living among unmarried adults. The nonrelatives who share accommodation with an unmarried household head are usually themselves unmarried adults living apart from their parental families.

The elderly

Although elderly married couples in America usually have lived in their own homes apart from their married children, Table 4 shows that in 1900 about 16 percent of married couples 65 or older did share living quarters with a married child and his or her spouse. Such intergenerational living has virtually disappeared in this century.

Equally dramatic has been the shift in living arrangements of elderly unmarried persons. Rough comparisons between 1900 and 1975 (Table 4) suggest that in 1900 over one-third of such persons lived with a married child, but by 1975 only 7 percent did. The proportion of older unmarried Americans living alone has increased from about one in ten to two out of three. Most of these are elderly widows or divorced women who never remarried. They can expect to live alone

for a long period, since women now outlive men by a wide margin.

Although the parent-child relationship is often stressed as the crucial family tie in American society, significant numbers of older Americans—13 percent of the unmarried and 5 percent of the married in 1975—live with siblings or other relatives. This type of living arrangement is particularly important for elderly people who never married and lack the kinship support of spouse or children.[92]

Living arrangements of the elderly are more varied for blacks than for whites. Fewer black elderly couples live by themselves (62 percent as compared to 84 percent of elderly white couples in 1975) and many more live with children (23 versus 11 percent) or with other relatives (16 versus 4 percent). Similar racial differences exist for the unmarried elderly.[93]

One reason for the decline in coresidence of the elderly and their married children is that today's elderly are those who had their children in the low-fertility years of the 1920s to the early 1940s and now have fewer children with whom they might live in old age than earlier generations did; about 20 percent of all persons over 65 in 1975 had no living children.[94] The next generation of elderly—the parents of the larger baby boom families—will have more children available, as noted earlier, but it seems unlikely that many more than now will opt to move in with children.

Surveys of residential preferences indicate that most elderly who live alone prefer to maintain their independence so long as their health and financial circumstances permit, though most also want to live near their children. As they grow older and their health deteriorates, more of the elderly do live with children; in 1975, 19 percent of unmarried men and 31 percent of unmarried women over age 80 lived with a child.[95]

Maintaining a separate household now is economically more feasible for many elderly Americans. Because of Social Security benefits that have outpaced the rise in real wages and better retirement pensions, the large majority of today's elderly do not depend on their children for financial support. In fact, a recent study revealed that, because most Social Security benefits are tax-exempt and elderly households average few persons, the elderly in 1980 actually had a higher per capita income after taxes ($6,300) than the general population ($6,000). Many of the elderly are poor, particularly women, but the proportion of elderly single women with incomes below the poverty level dropped from 72 to 32 percent between 1959 and 1980, while the proportion for elderly couples was 32 percent in 1959, and only 16 percent for all the noninstitionalized elderly in 1980. This improved financial situation has occurred even though few of the elderly now have an income from a job; in 1950, 45 percent of men aged 65 or older were still in the labor force, but only 18 percent in 1980.[96]

The elderly still depend on their families for much health care. In 1975, some 15 percent of the elderly were severely handicapped physically and two-thirds of these were cared for at home, with most of the care provided by relatives. Only 5 percent of all elderly persons were in health institutions in 1975.[97]

Although institutionalization of the elderly is sometimes viewed as abandonment of parents by their children, it is usually the solution of last resort. Most of the institutionalized are the very old with serious physical impairments requiring constant care. These needs often go beyond the capabilities of close family members, many of whom are themselves growing old. Only about one in ten of the institutionalized elderly still have a surviving spouse and about half have surviving children. Among the general elderly population, 80 percent have surviving children and four out of five men and one of every two women still have a spouse.[98] Providing family care for the elderly will become still more difficult if substantial numbers of Americans have no children or only one.

Families maintained by women

With increased divorce and out-of-wedlock childbearing, lower rates of marriage, and single mothers' greater tendency to live on their own, households headed by women with children under 18 but no husband present have now become a prominent type of family living arrangement. In 1982, there were nearly 6 million such households, making up 19 percent of all American households with minor children—double the number in 1970 and triple the number in 1960.[99]

This trend has inevitably increased the proportion of children who live for some of their childhood in a fatherless home. About a quarter of children who were six and under in 1970 lived for at least a year in a fatherless home by 1979. Eleven percent spent more than half these ten years in such families and 5 percent lived with their mother only for all ten years. If the current prevalence of female-headed families persists, it is estimated that 40 to 50 percent of all children will live in a fatherless family for some time before they reach 18.[100]

Black children are more likely than white children to live with their mother alone because of blacks' higher rates of marital dissolution and out-of-wedlock childbearing and lower rates of marriage and remarriage. Fifty-seven percent of black children, compared to 20 percent of white children, who were six and under in 1970 experienced family living without a father for some time in the 1970s. Nearly 20 percent of black children spent the entire decade in a family headed by the mother, and only a third lived continuously in a two-parent home.[101]

Time and money constraints are the two main reasons for concern about the high incidence of female-headed families. Single parents have less time for parenting, although research has not shown that the quality of care provided by single parents falls short of that in two-parent families. Single mothers are often severely limited in the financial resources available for them and their children. Not surprisingly, single mothers report greater stress and strains in their lives than do most other people.[102]

Nineteen percent of households with children under 18 are now headed by single mothers.

Although single mothers with minor children made up only 19 percent of all family households with children in 1982, they accounted for 55 percent of households with minor children whose reported 1981 income put them below the poverty level. About 44 percent of fatherless families with children under 18 and 61 percent of those with children under six were classified as poor; for husband-wife families the figures were 9 and 11 percent. The 1981 median income of female-headed families with children under age 18 ($9,200) was about one-third that of similar husband-wife families ($26,200).[103]

Earning a living wage is difficult for a single mother, both because of the problem of arranging child care (which they share with all working mothers) and because they tend to be ill-prepared for the job market; many were housewives or

part-time workers prior to a divorce and others are young, never-married women with little education. As a result, impoverished single mothers find it difficult to climb out of poverty by their own efforts and many remain below the poverty level year after year, with the most likely escape being marriage. Although welfare payments for single mothers, Aid to Families with Dependent Children, have kept pace with the increase in female-headed households, evidence concerning whether the availability of welfare encourages unmarried women to have children or men to desert their families is inconclusive.[104]

Extended family living

The trend toward nuclear family households and independent living obscures the importance of extended family living in the United States. While relatively few live in extended households during any particular year, many Americans find it convenient or necessary to live with relatives at some time during their lives. Though virtually all young couples now begin marriage in their own households, as noted, 19 percent of white couples and 43 percent of black couples reported in the early 1970s that they had lived with other kin for some time during the first five years of marriage. Most lived in the homes of parents, but some took kin into their own homes.[105] Extended family living also occurs during the initial adjustment to separation or divorce and when a person is old and in need of assistance.

For children, having a grandparent or another relative move in, or going to their home for a period, can be important when parents temporarily find it difficult to fulfill their responsibilities because of a death, serious illness, or a single mother's lack of time and financial resources. In 1975, 9 percent of elderly whites and 36 percent of elderly blacks reported that they had at some point had "substantial or primary responsibility" for grandchildren.[106]

Family Relationships Beyond the Household

Although most Americans may share a household with only a few close family members or none at all, they do maintain contact with a substantial network of kin, often over considerable distances.

Throughout the nation's history, kin have become dispersed, beginning with the first immigrations from abroad and continuing with migratory flows within the country from east to west, south to north, from rural to urban areas, and now from Frostbelt to Sunbelt, and from cities to the far suburbs and countryside. Family relationships have always been important forces in these migrations. In earlier times, parents with their married children and grandchildren or groups of families often migrated together and many moves to new areas were prompted because relatives were already there to help with relocation. But many others migrated alone or with only a small family core, and family ties became attenuated when contact depended on an erratic postal service or arduous travel over long distances. Even today, contact with dispersed family members involves considerable commitment, given the expense and difficulties of long-distance communication.

Although Americans continue to be highly mobile, however, studies have shown that most live close to at least some relatives and maintain contact with many through visits, frequent communication, and mutual assistance.[107] One study of newborn white children and their families living in the Detroit metropolitan area in 1962 found that five-sixths of these children had at least one grandmother and the majority at least one married aunt or uncle living in the Detroit area, and nearly half had a grandparent or married aunt or uncle living in the same neighborhood. Only about one in

Steve Turner

A family reunion. Though most Americans now share a household with only a few close family members or none at all, they do maintain contact with a substantial network of kin.

eleven of the children lacked nearby close kin. Sixty percent of these families got together with relatives at least weekly and only about 13 percent saw relatives less than once a month. Further, the large majority of the families received assistance from their relatives in the form of gifts, child care, help when sick, taking care of the house, financial advice, and loans. Almost half of the mothers, for example, had received help from one of the child's grandmothers following the birth of the child.[108]

The close involvement of young children with grandparents noted in this study would have been less possible in earlier times when fewer people survived to enjoy grandchildren. Improved life expectancy has now made possible intergenerational relationships which frequently extend across four and even five generations.

A study conducted in Muncie, Indiana, in 1977 showed that a high percentage of the close relatives of the residents surveyed lived within 50 miles of the city, including 61 percent of their living parents, 49 percent of siblings, and 68 percent of grown children. Most of those with surviving parents saw them at least monthly and almost half saw them weekly or more; siblings were visited about half as often. Additional contacts with relatives were made via letters and telephone and the majority of Muncie residents also reported that they exchanged aid with relatives.[109]

Most elderly Americans also have and interact with a fairly extensive network of kin, not only younger generations, as already indicated, but also siblings. A national study conducted in 1975 found that four-fifths of Americans aged 65 and over have surviving children, as noted earlier, about the same proportion have grandchildren, half have great grandchil-

dren, and four-fifths have a surviving sibling. Only about 5 percent have no surviving children or siblings. In 1975, about half of the elderly with surviving children lived with a child or less than ten minutes away; another fourth lived no more than 30 minutes from a child. During the week prior to the interview, three-fourths of those with children saw a child, one-third with surviving siblings saw a brother or sister, and three out of ten saw a more distant relative. Seventy percent of the elderly with children reported providing assistance to them and nearly as many received help from children. Many also reported a similar exchange of help between them and grandchildren and great grandchildren. The elderly with failing health consistently report that relatives are their chief source of help, and relatives continue to be the primary source of emotional and social support.[110]

Undoubtedly, there are substantial numbers of Americans with few kin, others have many relatives with whom they do not interact, some relationships may be more negative than positive, and many relatives are unable, for whatever reasons, to provide support desired by family members. Nevertheless, the vast majority of Americans today clearly maintain active contact with a considerable number of relatives.

Change and Continuity

Present-day American family patterns present a mosaic of change and continuity. Some current patterns of family life—the high incidence of divorce and independent living—are clearly different from the past. Other dimensions—age at first marriage—are now very similar to earlier patterns despite substantial recent fluctuations. Some recent changes incorporate both new developments and a return to old patterns. For example, the influx of mothers into the paid labor force constitutes an important change in the roles of women, but the new economic involvement of women also represents a reinstitution, though in a new form, of the contribution women made to family production in earlier times.

Despite changes in family structure and relationships, most Americans still regard the family as central to their well-being and happiness. Given the central importance of the family, the magnitude of family change has had a powerful impact on human relationships and on the quality of the lives of many individuals. The new availability of divorce, of employment for women, and the chances for independent living have provided important opportunities for many persons; yet, they also have brought psychological, social, and economic problems.

Explanations for the changes in American family life are difficult. Certainly the long-term trends in urbanization, industrialization, and economic growth have influenced family patterns, but many changes in the family have not shown clear and consistent relationships with these long-term trends. Major events, such as the Depression of the 1930s, World War II, and the Vietnam War also have had important and perhaps lasting influences on family life.

Predictions of future trends in family patterns are hazardous. Given the scope of change, total reversal of recent patterns appears unlikely. We can probably expect that many people will marry only after a considerable period of living apart from their parents, either alone or with friends. Most wives will juggle home care and a job, with many taking little or no time out for childbearing and rearing. Most working wives will have only one or two children and their preschool children will usually be cared for outside the home during their mothers' working hours. Many young children will experience the breakup of their parents' marriage and then will be likely to live with their mother only, though most will later acquire a stepfather and a readymade new family of "step-relatives." Most women can expect to live alone, though near their chil-

dren and grandchildren, at the end of their lives; the few elderly men who lose a spouse are likely to remarry.

But this scenario could change, just as family patterns have fluctuated in the past. Having at least three children could become fashionable again, as in the baby boom. More delayed marriage could mean more compatibility among couples once they marry and thus less divorce. Parents could assume more of the care of their own children with flexible working hours that allow one of them to be at home when children are, or as the computer age shifts the workplace back to the home for many women and even men.

Although future changes in the family could actually bring more rather than fewer problems, the resilience of the family amidst the changes of the past demonstrates the ability of family life to adapt in a changing world. Families and family relationships continue to play a vital role in today's world and are likely to do so in the future. □

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Population Bulletin

Planet Earth 1984-2034: A Demographic Vision

By Leon F. Bouvier

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Abstract—In recognition of 1984 as the year of both Orwell's famous futuristic novel and the International Population Conference following up the 1974 World Population Conference, this *Bulletin* examines the current state of world population and presents the author's speculations on what it might be 50 years from now. World population, now close to 4.8 billion and growing at 1.8 percent a year, is being shaped by three demographic phenomena: prolonged below-replacement fertility in developed nations, perhaps partly in response to the reduced need for workers in the emerging "information" era; rapid growth despite falling fertility in developing nations, due to earlier rapid mortality decline; and rapid urbanization in developing nations and unprecedented migration from poor to better-off nations. The author's assumptions for non-demographic factors related to population change in the next 50 years are: no world war, nuclear or otherwise; global resource adequacy; rapid scientific and technological progress, shared equitably; and the demise of capitalism and communism and greatly increased economic aid from advanced to less advanced nations. For 2034 he envisages nations divided into: (1) service/information societies (4 percent of global population) where immigration balances low fertility to prevent population decline; (2) industrialized nations (38 percent of the total), with fertility close to or at replacement level and growth slowing; (3) developing nations (43 percent), in sight of replacement-level fertility, and (4) least developed nations, with still critical demographic problems but only 15 percent of world population. He sees total population at 8.03 billion, but growth is down to 0.8 percent a year and global zero growth is possible in another 50 years. He warns that his relatively optimistic scenario for 2034 will only be possible if humankind acts to see that the stated non-demographic assumptions are borne out.

Editor: Jean van der Tak

Graphics: George Hager

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Planet Earth 1984-2034: A Demographic Vision

By Leon F. Bouvier

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POPULATION BULLETIN

Vol. 39, No. 1, February 1984

Planet Earth 1984-2034: A Demographic Vision

By **Leon F. Bouvier**

Population Reference Bureau, Inc.

About this *Population Bulletin* and its author

In this Bulletin, *demographer Leon Bouvier examines the present demographic situation of planet Earth and speculates what it might be 50 years from now. The inspiration for the* Bulletin *was both the arrival in fact of* 1984, *the fictional date of George Orwell's famous futuristic novel, and the designation of 1984 for the International Population Conference planned as a tenth-anniversary followup to the World Population Conference of 1974.*

The Bulletin *differs considerably from the Population Reference Bureau's usual publications. It does not rely primarily on standard demographic techniques and data sources; rather, it reflects the views and vision of one demographer, the author. Thus, the* Bulletin *is not intended as a specifically demographic article and it does not necessarily represent the opinions of the PRB, its officers or its staff.*

Leon Bouvier is Senior Research Associate at the Population Reference Bureau. He has served as staff demographer to two population-related commissions of the U.S. government—the Select Committee on Population and the Select Commission on Immigration and Refugee Policy. He is author of numerous Population Bulletins, *many articles in professional journals, and several books, including (with Robert Weller) the textbook* Population: Demography and Policy *(St. Martin's Press, 1981). He holds the Ph.D. in sociology from Brown University.*

The author appreciates the constructive advice received during his preparation of this Bulletin *from his colleagues at PRB—Cary Davis, Carl Haub, Elaine Murphy, Robert Worrall and, in particular, editor Jean van der Tak. However, the opinions expressed are solely his.*

The author wishes to dedicate this Bulletin *on the future of planet Earth to his eight wonderful grandchildren who will experience the 21st century. Hopefully, should they read this* Bulletin *in 2034, they will not think too unkindly about their "pépère."*

Thirty-five years ago, George Orwell gave us *Nineteen Eighty-Four.*[1] As humankind in fact reaches that ominous year, it is appropriate to examine just where we stand on this planet we call Earth. But beyond that, the mystique surrounding the year 1984 also tempts us to use it as a *starting point* from which to look once again into the future. This *Bulletin* is such an attempt.

It is not another "1984 revisited." Instead, in recognition of 1984 as also the tenth anniversary of the World Population Conference in Bucharest and the year of the International Population Conference scheduled for August in Mexico City, this *Bulletin* examines what the size, distribution and composition of the planet's population might be 50 years from now and what that will mean for Earthlings in 2034.

Projecting or predicting the future population size of the world or its countries and regions is not a novel idea, of course. As early as 1751, Benjamin Franklin in his "Observations Concerning the Increase of Mankind" assumed that the population of the American Colonies at that time was about one million. He then predicted: "This one million doubling, suppose, but once in twenty-five years, will, in another century, be more than the people of England, and the greatest number of Englishmen will be on this side of the water."[2] He also expressed concern that "the number of purely white people in the world is proportionately small" but explained that "perhaps I am partial to the complexion of my country, for such kind of partiality is natural to mankind."

The first set of world and regional population projections to be prepared by

Satellite view of Earth. NASA

the United Nations was published in 1952.[3] The Population Reference Bureau's *World Population Data Sheet,* which always includes a column on future population size, has been published annually since 1962. In this *Bulletin* we go beyond straightforward projections to examine how the demographic assumptions selected will reflect social, individual and political behavior around the world and what the results of these assumptions about demographic behavior will mean for the societies and the world of 2034.

All humans on planet Earth are population actors; that is what is meant by demographic behavior. We are born and, in turn, we give birth to others; we move or we do not move; we all die, but at younger or older ages, depending on numerous social as well as biological circumstances. Our decisions to have numerous offspring or none at all, our decisions to move within a country or across international borders, the fact that we can expect to live 50 or 80 years—all are affected by the political, technological, economic, societal and ecological forces that surround us.

Our demographic behavior will in turn determine whether the population of planet Earth—now around 4.8 billion and growing by some 83 million a year—will be up to 10 billion and still growing rapidly in 2034 or be closer to 7 billion and approaching stabilization or zero growth. Our population acts will determine whether 80 or 85 percent of the planet's population will be living in developing countries, as currently defined, and whether cultural heterogeneity will replace cultural homogeneity in some nations. It is thus important that our vision of the future not be limited to simple projections based on a series of alternative demograhic assumptions. While these serve a useful purpose, still more important is to consider *why* these assumptions are selected, that is, how our demographic behavior is affected by other forces and what the results will mean for humankind.

Setting the Stage: Some Demographic Precursors

Below-replacement fertility in developed countries

Sometime around 1973, a momentous new demographic phenomenon began to unfold throughout most of the developed world—fertility fell below the level of 2.1 births per woman needed to replace the population in the long run *and remained there.* Country after country—Canada, East Germany, West Germany, the United Kingdom, the United States—reported fertility rates under two births per woman in 1973 and still lower rates in the early 1980s (see Table 1). Actual population size did not begin to fall immediately in the early 1970s. This is because all of these nations experienced a rise in their fertility rate after World War II; some for just a few years; others, like Australia, Canada and the United States, for ten or 15 years. As a result, the number of young couples in the childbearing ages was relatively substantial in the 1970s so that even with extraordinarily low fertility *per woman,* births continued to outnumber deaths each year, reflecting what is called a population's built-in "momentum for growth." But by the late 1970s, the effect of that momentum had subsided in many European countries and in some, annual deaths began to outnumber annual births. Population decline was noted in Austria and East and West Germany. Continued immigration and the higher fertility of immigrants warded off decline for a while in other countries, but by the early 1980s, France and the United Kingdom were losing population, as well as Hungary in Eastern Europe.

In the more junior developed nations—United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand—the trend toward actual population decline is slower because of the

Table 1. Fertility Rates in Selected Developed Countries: 1970, 1973, 1975, 1982

Country	Total fertility rate[a]			
	1970	1973	1975	1982
Europe				
Austria	2.32	1.95	1.84	1.70
Belgium	2.24	1.96	1.73	1.60
Denmark	1.95	1.94	1.92	1.43
France	2.47	2.29	1.93	1.94
Germany, East	2.19	1.58	1.54	1.86[b]
Germany, West	2.01	1.54	1.45	1.40
Hungary	1.96	1.95	2.35	1.79
Italy	2.37	2.33	2.19	1.57[b]
Luxembourg	1.97	1.55	1.55	1.58[b]
Netherlands	2.58	1.92	1.66	1.49
Norway	2.51	2.24	1.98	1.71
Spain	2.87	2.81	2.80	1.99[b]
Sweden	1.92	1.87	1.77	1.62
Switzerland	2.09	1.80	1.60	1.55
United Kingdom	2.44	2.02	1.81	1.84[b]
Other areas				
Australia	2.85	2.49	2.15	1.94[c]
Canada	2.33	1.93	1.90	1.70[b]
Japan	2.13	2.14	1.89	1.74[c]
United States	2.48	1.90	1.80	1.89

Sources: Jean-Noel Biraben, "L'Europe: données statistiques," *Population*, July-October 1978, p. 994; Alain Monnier, "L'Europe et les pays developpés d'outre-mer: données statistiques," *Population*, July-October 1983, Table 3, p. 833; and Center for International Research, U.S. Bureau of the Census, personal communication, January 1984.

[a]The *total fertility rate* indicates the average number of lifetime births per woman in a population if all women were to live through their childbearing ages (usually considered ages 15-49) bearing children at the same rates as women of those ages actually did in a given year. [b]1981. [c]1980.

reverberating impact of the tremendous post-World War II "baby boom" generation and because immigration levels remain high. Nevertheless, the U.S. Census Bureau projected in 1982 that the U.S. population would stop growing at about 309 million by 2050 and then begin to decline, given continued below-replacement fertility and if net immigration is limited to 450,000 per year.[4] Espenshade, Bouvier and Arthur have calculated that even with net immigration of 400,000 per year, the U.S. population would be reduced to 108 million before achieving zero growth in some 200 years, if the national fertility rate continues below replacement.[5]

Short-lived periods of such low fertility have occurred in the past. During the Great Depression of the 1930s fertility fell below replacement level in most of Western Europe and in the United States, for example.[6] But the rates began to climb again by the late 1930s in the United States and during World War II in Western Europe. Never before in modern history has fertility been so low in so many countries for such a long period as has been the case since 1973. And as of 1984, the rate in most developed countries shows no evidence of climbing back to the point where population growth, or at least population replacement, can be assured over the long run.

End of growth in developed world

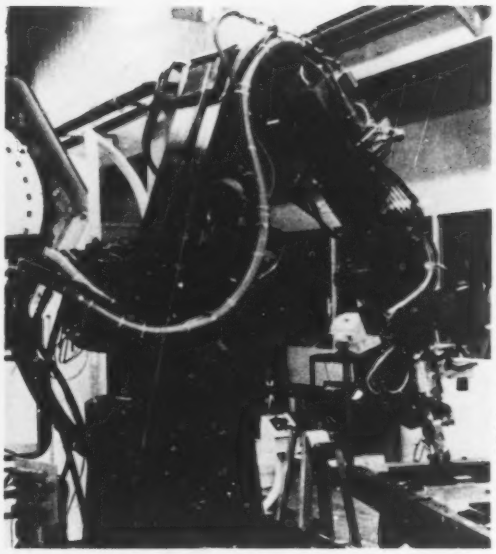
What is the significance of this new demographic pattern throughout most of the developed world? It suggests an adaptation to a new era. The developed nations of planet Earth may well be poised on the brink of an entirely new age when the quantitative demands for labor will be modest, although the qualitative demands will be great.

There have been harbingers of this momentous change. John Naisbitt notes in his 1982 bestseller *Megatrends:* "In 1956 for the first time in American history, white-collar workers and technical-managerial positions outnumbered blue-collar workers. Industrial America was giving way to a new society where for the first time in history most of us worked with information rather than producing goods."[7] Naisbitt named this the "information society." Sociologist Daniel Bell called it the "post-industrial society."[8] Demographer Anthony Richmond went one step further and labeled it the *Verbindungschnetschaft* (roughly, "suburban post-industrial") society as distinct from its predecessors *Gemeinschaft* ("rural-agricultural") and *Gesellschaft* ("urban-industrial") societies.[9] None of these social observers, however, have identified an end to population growth as an important ingredient in this emerging new society.

We are at the onset of a social upheaval as great as that touched off by the Industrial Revolution which began some 200 years ago in Western Europe and then spread to its colonies. Interestingly, a demographic revolution occurred then also. With the improved living conditions resulting from the Industrial Revolution, mortality began to fall gradually from the end of the 18th century. Couples took a while to adjust to the fact that more of their children were surviving and fertility generally did not begin to fall until late in the 19th century. During this interim period, population growth rose to over 1 percent a year in many Western European countries, rates which were unprecedented in world history to that time. This growth helped supply workers needed for the cities' burgeoning industries and immigrants for the "New World." Then Western European couples came to realize that they could take advantage of improving social and economic opportunities by having fewer, but better educated children. Today's population actors—at least those in developed nations—are once again responding appropriately to meet the needs of a new era.

This "information society," as Naisbitt calls it, benefiting from high technology and, by 1990, from robotic technology, will be knowledge-intensive rather than labor-intensive. The pattern of shifting the production of shoes or textiles, for example, to lower-wage developing countries is now being followed with the sophisticated "tools" of the information age. The 1983 decision by California-based Atari to move assembly-line work for its microcomputers to Hong Kong and Taiwan is but an early example of what is likely to become standard procedure. Even many service occupations may be eliminated in developed countries. Economist Wassily Leontief recently suggested that "the ability of the service sector to absorb displaced workers will diminish." He added: "As soon as not only the physical but also the controlling 'mental' functions involved in the production of goods and services can be performed without the participation of human labor, labor's role as an indispensable 'factor of production' will progressively diminish."[10]

Paralleling the technological evolution of their societies, developed nations are attaining demographic maturity. To borrow somewhat warily from the "organismic" sociologists of the 19th century, organismic demography would visualize societies following the same aging cycles as individuals. Societies are born (following a very long pregnancy) and rapid population growth immediately occurs. This is followed by an adolescent period



Thomas J. O'Halloran—USN&WR

Robots will displace much human labor in the new information age.

when growth is still taking place, but at a much slower pace. The United States is just emerging from adolescence at this time. Adulthood arrives, as it did in Western European countries in the late 1960s, and with total maturity no further growth is to be observed. (Occasional late spurts could be called "middle-age spread," but this would be carrying the organismic analogy too far!)

Some nations in the developed world are younger than others but all are now adults. Some have reached old age and face population decline. A few could eventually "disappear" as distinctive societies in the sense that ancient Greece and the Roman empire disappeared.

Continuing growth in developing world

But what of the developing world—the other 75 percent of planet Earth's current population? In some of these regions major demographic changes have also taken place. Soon after the end of World War II mortality began to fall precipitously in Latin America and in Asia, though not in Africa. The mortality decline that had taken up to a century in Western Europe occurred in about 15 years from the late 1940s to the early 1960s. Meanwhile, fertility remained high—much higher than it ever was in Western Europe where national birth rates were reduced during the 18th and 19th centuries because many women married late or not at all. The results in the developing world were rates of "natural increase" (birth rates minus death rates) of 3 percent and upward a year—two or three times what they ever were in Western Europe. Public concern over this "population explosion" began in the 1950s and rose to a pitch in the late 1960s with the publication of biologist Paul Ehrlich's *The Population Bomb*.[11] The 1970s gave rise to the controversy between those advocating development assistance and those favoring family planning assistance, but both camps were bent on solving the problem of rapid population growth in developing countries. Yet rapid growth continues to this day and will for some time to come, despite remarkable progress in reducing fertility in some of these countries. Why is this? How can population be increasing so rapidly while the average fertility per couple is falling?

In those countries that benefited most from mortality decline in the 1950s and 1960s, a "death dearth" occurred while fertility remained high. Infants and children who a generation earlier would have been likely to die remained alive to become the young adults of the 1970s and 1980s. These young adults constitute a giant generation in the childbearing ages—much larger even than that of the United States and Canada today which resulted not from mortality decline but from the fertility rise, or baby boom, of about 1947 to 1964. Even though these couples in many developing countries are averaging fewer children than their parents did, there are so many of them that the total numbers of births continue to increase each year and will for several decades, despite falling fertility rates. For developing countries the effect of this built-in momentum for population growth is larger and will last longer than the comparable "baby boom" effect in the

United States because previous fertility was so much higher and their mortality decline so precipitate. In Mexico, for example, women still averaged 6 to 7 births apiece in the late 1950s compared to the U.S. baby boom peak of just over 3.5 births per woman at about the same time. Currently the Mexican fertility rate is down to about 4.7 births per woman and the United Nations projects that it will be down to about 2.3 births per woman by 2025. Yet, the United Nations also projects that because of continuing large proportions of young people in the childbearing ages, annual numbers of births in Mexico will actually increase from about 2.7 million in the early 1980s to around 3.2 million births in 2025. That, coupled with further decline in the death rate, could mean that Mexico's population will balloon in a mere 45 years from 70 million in 1980 to 174 million in 2025.[12]

Figure 1 shows estimates and projections from the Centro LatinoAmericano de Demografia (CELADE) which sum up the picture for Latin America as a whole. The regional birth rate per 1,000 population has fallen rapidly since 1960 and will continue to fall much faster than the death rate to 2025 so that the *rate* of natural increase falls. But population *numbers* continue to grow dramatically and will still be mounting well into the 21st century.

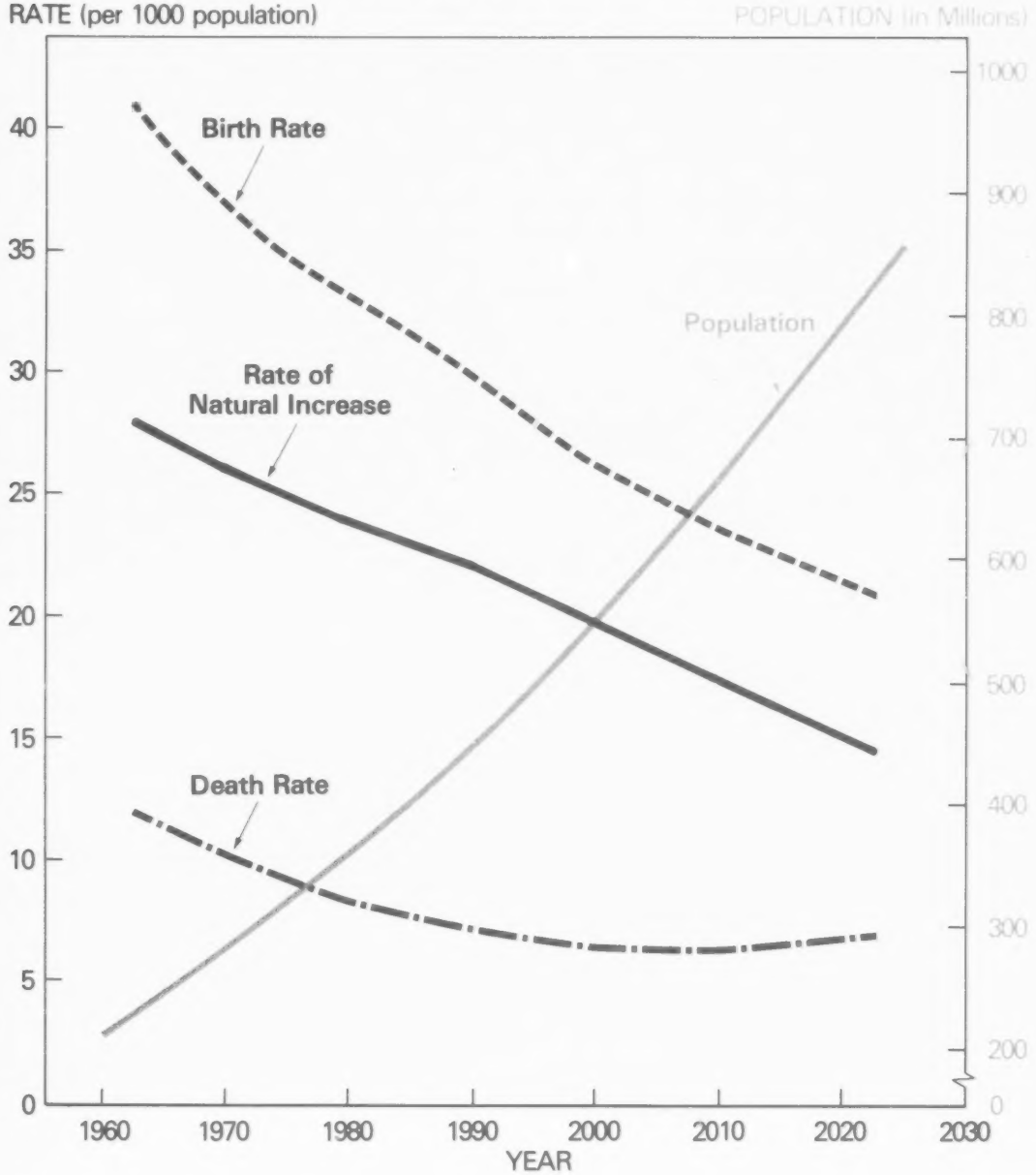
Thus, this demographic change—the mortality decline—while justly heralded as the beginning of a better life for developing countries, also contributed to high growth rates in many countries where fertility is now falling. Unprecedented numbers of young adults have survived to have themselves what in the aggregate are even larger numbers of children, despite the drop in the average number of children per couple. This is compounding the problems of providing adequate care and education for dependent children and jobs and housing for the parent generation.

From this one should not conclude that mortality reduction should not be encouraged. On the contrary, every human being has the right to as long and healthy a life as possible. Furthermore, as life expectancy increases as a result of declining death rates, the contribution of mortality decline to population growth is reduced. When life expectancy at birth is as low as, say, 35 years, 35 to 40 percent of deaths in a population occur to children aged five and under, while 25 to 30 percent occur to those aged 60 and over. At a life expectancy of 75 years (as in some developed countries today), only 5 to 20 percent of deaths occur to small children, and 70 to 80 percent occur to those aged 60 and over. Demographers Davidson Gwatkin and Sarah Brandel point out the significance of this shift for population growth.[13] "Older people very rarely have children. Hence delaying the death of a 60-year-old adds only one person to the population. In contrast, when an infant is saved from death, the person saved is only the beginning. In later years that person's children, grandchildren and further descendants are added to the population in geometrically increasing numbers." This effect wanes as life expectancy increases. By the time life expectancy reaches 55 years (three years less than the overall average for less developed countries today) fewer young people are dying, so that another gain of five years in life expectancy "would yield an increase in the population only slightly more than half as large as a gain of five years from a life expectancy of 35 years."

International migration mounting

The current and future population picture of planet Earth is being increasingly shaped by a third demographic phenomenon—one that may be a reaction to the enormous growth in developing regions. Perhaps more than at any time in the past, residents of the poorest nations are making the decision to move across international borders, sometimes illegally, in search of a better life. Humans have always been peripatetic, but with

Figure 1. Latin American Birth, Death and Natural Increase Rates and Total Population: 1960-2025



Source: Centro LatinoAmericano de Demografia, *Latin American Demographic Situation as Assessed in 1980*, Series A, No. 168 (Santiago, Chile: 1981).

the emergence of nation states and political barriers in the late 19th and early 20th centuries migration had become relatively controlled. However, with recent spectacular advances in communications and transportation facilities, added to the staggering poverty in developing regions (caused at least in part

by rapid population growth), more and more people are ignoring these constraints and are moving despite the possibly dire consequences. This is happening all over the planet, not only between developing and developed nations, but also between less affluent and more affluent developed countries, as from Portugal to France and Italy to West Germany, and between the poorest developing nations and their somewhat better-off neighbors, as from Egypt to Saudi Arabia and Colombia to Venezuela.

In 1948 the noted sociologist and demographer Kingsley Davis wrote:

"Demographically the potential migration pent up in today's world is enormous. Not only is the earth's total population increasing at the fastest rate ever known, but the increase is extremely unequal as between regions. . . . As a result the previous inequalities of population distribution are being aggravated rather than alleviated. . . . Between the two kinds of areas the differences in level of living are fantastic. What more natural than to expect the destitute masses of the underprivileged regions to swarm across international and continental boundaries into the better regions? Like the atmosphere, the earth's population is characterized by high and low pressure areas, and one expects an inevitable current of migration from one to the other. Actual migration, however, is not governed solely by high and low pressure. It is governed by economic costs, political barriers, ethnic attitudes, and limited horizons. These barriers have slowed down migration to a snail's pace. One wonders how long the inequalities of growth between major regions can continue without an explosion."[14]

Davis' questions are now being answered by millions upon millions of people who are giving up their long accepted ways of life in search of something better. They may be legal immigrants whose decision to move results from considerable discussion and thought. They may be refugees forced to abandon their homeland because of political strife. They may be illegal immigrants who surreptitiously enter a country and lead guarded lives for fear of apprehension.

Together, these three demographic phenomena stem from the behavior of all of us as population actors; together they will contribute to the new and exciting era of the 21st century. Interestingly, all three demographic processes—fertility, mortality and migration—are involved in these trends: (1) In the developed regions, fertility has fallen to historical lows; (2) In developing regions, mortality has fallen considerably (and fertility is beginning to fall); (3) Throughout the world, massive migration is taking place as more people than ever search for what might be a better life. Understanding these three demographic changes is essential in any attempt to examine the future population of planet Earth.

Planet Earth's Population: 1984

At the outset of 1984, the planet's numbers are fast approaching the five billion mark. The population of planet Earth has more than tripled in the past century from about 1.5 billion in 1884 to nearly 4.8 billion in 1984 (see Table 2). It has doubled in the 39 years since the end of World War II in 1945 and would double again in the next 39 years if the current estimated growth rate of 1.8 percent a year were to continue. These are disturbing statistics to consider.

The 4.8 billion inhabitants of planet Earth are far from being equally distributed. Some 22 percent of the world's population resides in China, which has only 6.5 percent of the world's land area. Within China, about 94 percent of its some 1.03 billion people live in just 45 percent of the nation's territory.[15] Australia, the sixth largest country in terms of land area, is home to only 15 million people. Urbanization appears to have accelerated in all countries and about 40 percent of the world's population now lives in urban areas.

More important are the dramatic differences between the population statistics of less developed and more developed